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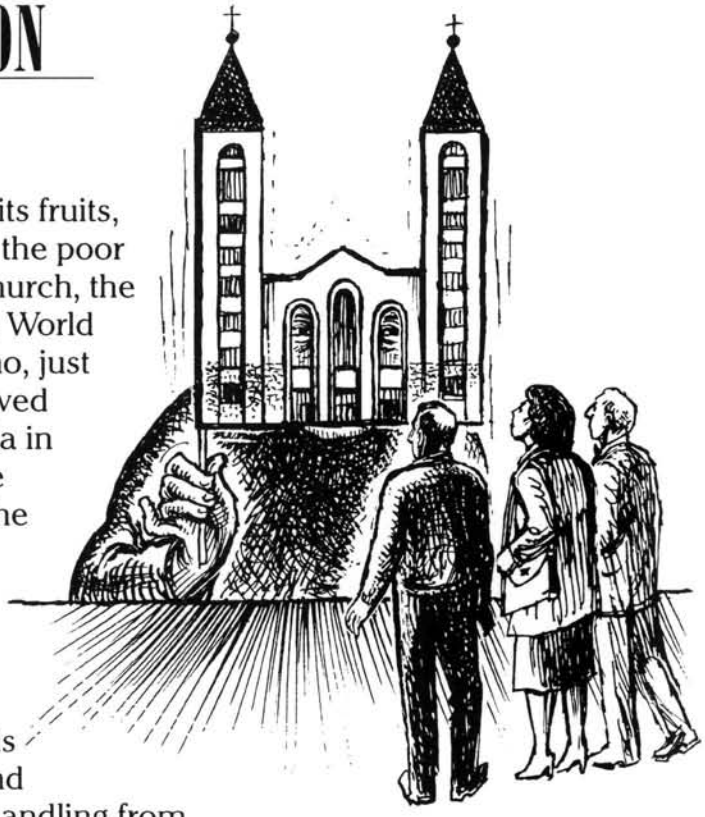
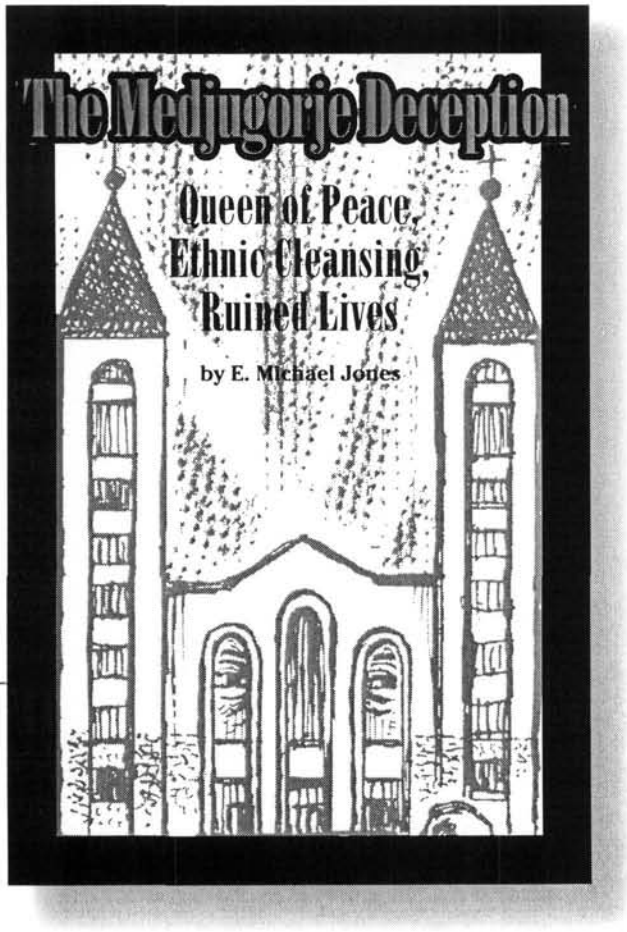
THE MEDJUGORJE DECEPTION



Proponents of Medjugorje like to talk about its fruits, but ignore the broken families, the pregnant nuns, the poor people bilked of their money, the division in the Church, the de facto schism, the worst fighting in Europe since World War II, the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Gradno, just five kilometers from Medjugorje — all which followed inexorably from those children on that hill in Bosnia in June of 1981. *The Medjugorje Deception* breaks the conspiracy of silence that has surrounded one of the biggest hoaxes of the 20th century. It tells the full truth from beginning to end, from the bloody atrocities during World War II on the other side of Apparition Hill to their bloody sequel in the ethnic cleansing of Mostar's Muslims with money raised by Medjugorje groups. *The Medjugorje Deception* is more than a book; it's a spiritual work of mercy, and it's available now for $19.95 plus $3 shipping and handling from Fidelity Press.



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Thomas Fleming
Chronicles

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On Life and Law

Aaron D. Wolf's condemnation of civil disobedience by pro-life activists (*Cultural Revolutions*, October) strikes me as a classic case of sloppy thinking, characterized by what Hannah Arendt called the inability to grasp elementary distinctions.

Wolf's sweeping denial that one may break the law even for a good cause is not good law. There exists in common law something called the defense of necessity. For the achievement of a great enough good or the avoidance of a great enough evil, one may legitimately disobey laws bearing on matters of less importance—for instance, one may disobey laws against trespassing in order to rescue someone from a burning house. Pro-lifers have argued for years that, in violating laws protecting the private property of abortion clinic operators in order to save human lives, they are committing no crime. (Needless to say, our corrupt courts generally will not permit this defense even to be offered.)

Furthermore, if a supposed law is in violation of the natural law and hence of the law of God, it is not a law at all and has no binding power on the conscience of the citizen. Human law, in order to be binding, must be grounded in, or at least consistent with, the natural law. We are not only permitted to disobey a law which fails to meet this condition but may even be required by conscience to do so, as Pope John Paul II made clear in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*:

> Laws which authorize and promote abortion and euthanasia are therefore radically opposed not only to the good of the individual but also to the common good; as such they are completely lacking in authentic juridical validity. Disregard for the right to life, precisely because it leads to the killing of the person whom society exists to serve, is what most directly conflicts with the possibility of achieving the common good. Consequently, a civil law authorizing abortion or euthanasia ceases by that very fact to be a true, morally binding civil law.
>
> Abortion and euthanasia are thus crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a *grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection*.

Laws permitting the murder of the innocent certainly fall in this category. An abortuary is an enterprise which, strictly speaking, has no right to exist, and those who attempt to interfere with its activities are simply doing their duty as citizens in upholding the laws, given the refusal of the civil authorities to do so.

There are also serious problems with Wolf's claim that only the state, operating through the executive branch, has the authority to stop the hand of a murderer (even self-defense being permitted only where it is one's own life or that of a family member which is in danger). On the contrary, anyone who witnesses an attempt on the life of an innocent person has a right (maybe even an obligation) to intervene if possible. I would go beyond this, however, to argue that we are dealing today with a situation where civil authority is, strictly speaking, absent. The only effective civil authority exercising power in America today is the central government in Washington, a government which succeeded the federal government established by the Founding Fathers. The present central government is operating largely on usurped powers not granted to the original federal government by the Constitution; hence it is an illegal government. It has *de facto* but not *de jure* sovereignty. In fact, it is not so much a government as an organized crime syndicate which has succeeded in getting control of a nation. This "government" has no authority to permit abortion, and hence actions to that effect on its part are null and void, and citizens have both the right and the duty to resist those actions by disobeying the edicts of such a "state."

One final point: Wolf applies the term "pornography" to the display, by pro-lifers, of such things as pictures of mangled, aborted babies. But when you are dealing with people who have psychologically walled themselves off from rational argument (feminists, for instance) the only hope of reaching them is at the gut level. Images like this have the goal of shocking people into awareness of the reality, and the horror, of what they are doing or per-

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mitting. That is why, at the end of World War II, General Eisenhower insisted on forcing Germans living in the vicinity of the death camps to tour those establishments. No amount of argument against Nazi racist theorizing could really substitute, under the circumstances, for the sight and smell of those emaciated corpses stacked up all over the place. What appalls me is not that pro-lifers persist in displaying comparable images, but that the very media which have no qualms about showing us the mangled corpses of people brutally murdered in places like Kosovo and Rwanda refuse to show pictures of aborted babies on grounds that these would be too disturbing to people, when in fact they are disturbing primarily to the nearly deadened consciences of our liberal elites.

I find it quite surprising to encounter this kind of legal positivism (and statism) in a generally sound publication like *Chronicles*. Wolf's appeal to the "rule of law" is highly inappropriate in the current situation, where we live, not under the rule of law, but under a reign of institutionalized lawlessness. It is our government which is guilty of taking the law into its own hands, not those citizens who resist official lawlessness.

—*George A. Kendall*
Grand Marais, MI

Mr. Wolf Replies:

Mr. Kendall's critique of my article can be distilled into the following argument: Some forms of civil disobedience are justifiable if they go against positive laws that contradict natural law. The pro-life movement engages in civil disobedience; therefore, its actions are justifiable.

In defense of his first postulate, he cites Pope John Paul II's words in *Evangelium Vitae*, and this Missouri-Synod Lutheran, in short, doth not protest. Indeed, as a Lutheran, I know that civil disobedience is sometimes necessary—under the authority of a "lesser magistrate" and not as individuals—as was the case for my evangelical forebears during the Reformation.

However, it is "sloppy thinking" to assume that the type of lawlessness exhibited by the pro-life movement is justifiable civil disobedience.

Which law is it that we, as individual Christians opposed to the barbaric practice of elective abortion, should disobey? Is there a law that requires Mr. Kendall's wife to have an abortion? No such law exists in America. The argument made by the Pope only applies to places like China, where women are forced to have abortions. No one is required by God or the United States government to *obey* a law that demands the murder of the innocent. Pro-lifers, however, trespass on abortuary grounds, display dirty pictures, and talk in mixed company about feti and placenta in an effort to thwart the immoral but legal killing of other people's unborn children.

Mr. Kendall then switches gears and raises the charge of "statism," chastising me for my assertion that "stopping the hands of a murderer is in the power of the executive branch." He suggests that I would relieve citizens of their duty to protect the innocent lives of those outside their own households. He implies that this duty is an element of self-defense.

But God gives His Church the power to forgive sins, and He gives kings—or civil governments who "bear not the sword in vain"—the power to restrain evil. Theologians largely have agreed that the clergy should not take positions as civil authorities because the two spheres should not be confused. God does not give the power of the sword to individuals as individuals. To deny this is to take yet another step toward statism—or anarchy. Pro-lifers, on the other hand, tend to take the view, "End abortion—right or wrong." Should we undermine the basis of civil society in order to stop abortions from occurring? Should we commit evil in order that good may come?

The pornographic display of the dead children of pagans is necessary, argues Mr. Kendall, because shocking people (and feminists) is the only effective means of communication. Ike and Hannah Arendt notwithstanding, this propagandistic approach to the communication of truth has greatly contributed to the creation of the slough of despond in which we now live. I remember the despair that grew within me when I attended our local "right to life" meetings. We talked about the next bill that *might* be signed by President Bush *if* it first passed through the Democrat-dominated Congress. We went over the specifics for the next protest at our local abortuary. We sought volunteers to man our "stages of fetal development" booth at the county fair. We made "Abortion Kills Children" signs for passersby to read at the annual Life Chain.

What did we expect to accomplish? Do individuals absorb the complex moral and theological truths necessary to obey God, respect life, and deplore murder by reading slogans and viewing disgusting pictures? No. Is Christendom reestablished through constitutional amendments? No. Christian civilization grows through families, churches, neighborhoods, and communities enraptured by the Gospel. If families and churches forsake the Gospel for social crusades in other people's neighborhoods, Christian civilization will erode. Overturn *Roe* v. *Wade* (a worthy goal), and states filled with sensitive, suburbanite Christians will be as much salt and light as they are right now. Transform our churches, communities, and families, and you just might turn the world upside down.

But today's Christian citizen of the world seems to be enraptured by Uncle Screwtape's advice to young Wormwood:

> The great thing is to direct [his] malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. There is no good at all in inflaming his hatred of Germans if, at the same time, a pernicious habit of charity is growing up between him and his mother, his employer, and the man he meets on the train.

Our second century forebears did not fall prey to this satanic diversion when they took in exposed infants and reared them in their own households. If only the early Christians had not wasted their time converting pagans, they might have marched on Rome, carrying signs that read "Exposure Kills Children."

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ALEKSANDR LEBED, governor of the vast Krasnoyarsk region of Siberia, shrugged off rumors circulating in late September that an ailing Boris Yeltsin would appoint the populist "combat general" as premier and then resign, leaving Lebed as acting president. The Krasnoyarsk governor claimed that the time may come when he will be "needed" to "clean up" Yeltsin's "mess," and he did agree that ex-presidents should be guaranteed a quiet retirement (otherwise they "cling to power tooth and nail"), but the "governor general" doubts that even the persuasive Tatyana Dyachenko—Yeltsin's daughter and *de facto* chief of staff, widely believed to favor such a scenario—could persuade "Boris I" that it is time to go. Yeltsin, Lebed claimed, would hang on to power "as long as he has two brain cells to rub together." "The game," Lebed intoned in his unmistakable bass growl, "will go on."

That may be, but a sick and incoherent Yeltsin (at summer's end, Moscow was rife with rumors that his health had taken a turn for the worse) just might be forced to step down, either by members of his entourage ("the family") hoping to save their own skins or by the Federation Council, Russia's upper house of parliament composed of regional leaders, who are flexing their growing political muscle. The question on the minds of Moscow's elites is just who will step in if the "guarantor of democracy," implicated in the recent spate of corruption scandals, should be forced out. "Plan B" (for Berezovsky, the Yeltsin Kremlin's answer to Rasputin), which under the rash of terrorist attacks in September and the deepening crisis in the North Caucasus, where Russian troops are combating the Islamic hordes of Chechen "field commander" Shamil Basayev, could be used as pretexts for imposing a state of emergency and calling off upcoming elections, has not been implemented. Meanwhile, the Kremlin's worst fears have been realized.

First, Yevgeni Primakov, perhaps the only public figure apart from Lebed who has not been tainted by credible corruption charges, agreed to re-enter politics, forming an uneasy political alliance with Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. The Primakov-Luzhkov block, "Fatherland-All Russia" (OVR), appears poised to challenge the Communists for the dominant position in the third post-communist Duma, slated for election in December. Primakov, whose ties to the "special services" are common knowledge within the Moscow ring road, is also the likely source of *kompromat* ("compromising material") circulating in reports both East and West on Kremlin corruption. The "family" is justifiably concerned about its post-Yeltsin future.

The second monkeywrench thrown into the Kremlin's plan was Lebed's refusal to sign up with "Unity" (also known as *medved*, "Bear"), a newly minted political movement made up overwhelmingly of governors from "have not" regions resentful of the capital—and its mayor—and equally resentful of the "national republics," those Russian Federation components based on non-Russian (mostly Muslim) nationalities, who are not too enthusiastic about ongoing punitive strikes on terrorist camps within the rebel Chechen republic. It just so happens that most of the "national republics" have lined up with OVR. Berezovsky, displaying the political insight he is justly known for, has been quietly—make that very quietly, since any public role in Unity's formation would scuttle the plan at the outset—lining up governors with a reputation as earthy *muzhiky* ("peasants"; in this context, the word conveys the image of a hardheaded "man of the soil" or "man's man") to form an effective counterweight to OVR, a counterweight that would harness the anger of Russia's vast number of disenchanted "protest voters." Berezovsky could then make a deal with Unity leaders to save the Kremlin court's hash in return for megabucks and media coverage to boost Unity into the political driver's seat. Very clever. But the plan hinged on *muzhik* number one, Aleksandr Lebed, signing on as the movement's leader. No dice. Lebed, a solitary man of action who is the very essence of earthy Russianness, will go it alone, building his political reputation on the numerous cracked heads of Krasnoyarsk thugs. Thus the talk of Dyachenko fishing for a limited deal to save papa, perhaps involving Lebed, if Primakov will not come to terms. The deal may yet come off—if the Federation Council, that is, does not pre-empt it by forcing Yeltsin out. Russia could do much worse than a Lebed-headed *junta* dedicated to crushing the Russian mafia, stabilizing the Caucasus, and making Russia semi-safe for business.

—*Denis Petrov*

BRITAIN'S DEFENSE POLICY prohibiting homosexuals from serving in the armed forces was recently struck down by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Formed in 1959 to enforce the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ECHR is a creature of the 41-nation Council of Europe. The court's authority comes from the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty under which the signatory nations have agreed to "undertake to abide by the final judgment of the Court in any case." The enforcement of the court's decisions is delegated to the Council's Committee of Ministers.

The cases dealing with the British military pitted the Ministry of Defence's policy declaring homosexuality to be "incompatible with service in the armed forces" against Article 8 of the Convention, which secures the "right to respect for private and family life." The cases heard by the ECHR were originally reviewed in the British appellate system, and the military's prohibition against homosexuality was upheld under a deferential "rational basis" standard. As one British judge phrased it: "the court may not interfere with the exercise of administrative discretion . . . save where the court is satisfied the decision in unreasonable."

The European Court of Human Rights, however, used a stricter standard in its review. The ECHR asked whether the policy was "necessary in a democratic society." In linking necessity and democracy, the ECHR averred that the "hallmarks of the latter [include] pluralism, tolerance, and broadmindedness." After constructing this liberal trinity, the court cast aside the Ministry of Defence's arguments that the ban on homosexuals was necessary to foster unit cohesion, avoid disruption, and provide soldiers living in close quarters a modicum of privacy. The ECHR belittled the ministry's studies on the attitudes of service members towards homosexuality as "represent[ing] a predisposed bias on the part of a heterosexual majority against a homosexual minority." Such a comment explains why the court's trinity of democracy does not include majority rule.

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In the end, judges from Poland, Lithuania, France, Austria, Norway, Britain, and Albania held that, because convincing and weighty reasons had not been offered for the ban, the Ministry's policy could not pass muster under the European Convention on Human Rights. The one judge from Cyprus dissented.

Upon learning of the court's ruling, Duncan Lustig-Prean, one of the litigants in the case who had been discharged from the Royal Navy because of his homosexuality, cheered the decision and noted that the "armed forces exist to defend the rights and freedoms of all members of society. They need to reflect the diversity of society they purport to defend." Of course, under such reasoning, the mentally and physically handicapped, who are certainly members of society, should be mustered into the armed forces. If homosexuality is no longer a ground to keep Lustig-Prean out of the navy, perhaps stupidity will suffice.

One might have hoped for some resistance in the British government to the court's ruling, but Defence Secretary Lord Robertson solemnly promised that "[t]his Government, like all governments, has to accept the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights." Robertson further declared that all disciplinary cases pending against homosexuals would be put on hold. The fact that just three years ago Parliament, formerly the repository of British sovereignty, voted 188-120 to keep the ban on gays in place shows a revolution has taken place. Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights now take a backseat to the universal rights of man as crafted by modern-day Robespierres and Couthons.

Thomas Jefferson once described the federal judiciary as the "engine of consolidation." Substitute the word "European" for "federal" and the future of the bureaucrats in Brussels and Strasbourg looks bright. Unfortunately, as the sun rises for the bureaucrats, it sets on the most important right of all, that of self-government. Perhaps the ECHR's ruling will force Britons to recognize what they have lost while they still have time to recover their birthright.

—*William J. Watkins, Jr.*

Russian-American relations, commentators warned, would be damaged by NATO's war in Yugoslavia, but the Clinton administration dismissed the idea. Russian anti-Americanism seemed a passing phase that would dissipate when media attention turned to the next international crisis. Events like Boris Yeltsin's August 25 meeting with Jiang Zemin, in which Russia's president accused NATO of "trying to build a world order that would be convenient only to them," cast serious doubt on such optimism.

More lies at stake here than an ailing leader's wish to play China and the United States against one another. The chairman of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, Vladimir Lukin, has distinguished general anti-Western sentiment from specific anger at the United States. Calling Russian opinion "keen rather than deep," Lukin suggested a change in U.S. policy might remove "this acute civilizational sentiment of alienation toward America and NATO countries." Attitudes among Russian intellectuals suggest a far greater distrust of the West. Not long before Lukin's remarks, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn likened NATO, in its war against Serbia, to Adolf Hitler. "For the third month before the eyes of the world a European country is being destroyed," he said in a widely cited interview; NATO "wants to establish its order in the world, and it needs Yugoslavia simply as a pretext—let's punish Yugoslavia and the whole planet will tremble."

Western critics might join British historian Orlando Figs in dismissing the elderly Solzhenitsyn as "out of date," but many Russians share his sentiments. Moreover, Solzhenitsyn's statement builds on a long-standing critique. His famous Harvard speech in 1978 assailed the secular left's influence on American society, citing pornography, crime, a demoralizing popular culture, and passivity in the face of Soviet aggression. Significantly, Solzhenitsyn also criticized the West's history of colonizing other peoples. The "decline in courage" he noticed among ruling and intellectual elites failed to mitigate their willingness to use force, and much of Solzhenitsyn's criticism of America during the 1970's and 80's appears in Russian complaints today.

The political thaw under Khrushchev that allowed Solzhenitsyn to publish *One Day in the Life of Ivan Desinovich* also saw the gradual emergence of Russian nationalist sentiment. Communists tied Russian patriotism to Soviet identity, and slavophile intellectuals received active encouragement under Brezhnev. But while nationalists lauded the Soviet victory over Germany and achievement of superpower status, they decried the regime's assault on peasant folkways and the Orthodox Church. Socialism, they believed, sacrificed Russia's culture to a materialistic view of progress, and the nationalist revival provided as forceful and dangerous a critique of communism as did the liberal dissent epitomized by Andrei Sakharov.

Disillusionment among Russians sympathetic to Solzhenitsyn and other slavophiles drives their criticism of America, which now finds an audience far beyond their own ranks. Economic reforms made under the supervision of American experts impoverished many Russians and led others to believe Western interests robbed their country to secure it as a compliant source of raw materials. In a caricature of privatization that gave capitalism the air of a casino, apparatchiks bought at grossly devalued prices the state enterprises they once ran. The ruble's collapse and recent banking scandals only deepened disillusionment with the post-Soviet order. Aspects of American culture that Solzhenitsyn has attacked most bitterly took center stage with the end of Soviet censorship of Western films, television, and popular music. Once eager to emulate America, Russians developed a wary distrust of its culture and leadership.

That view provides the undercurrent to Russian outrage over Kosovo. Russians, rightly or wrongly, concluded that NATO defeated Serbia to humiliate their country and demonstrate American power. The reasons for that belief deserve more serious consideration than the American media or foreign policy establishment seems willing to give. While open conflict is unlikely, Russia's turn toward China and Iran threatens much more than globalism or the New World Order. By aiding regimes equally dangerous to both sides, leaders in Moscow and Washington may find they have damned themselves for the privilege of cursing each other.

—*William Anthony Hay*

Free Hawaii! One particularly annoying aspect of "Third Way" politics is its proponents' penchant for symbolic, feel-your-pain apologies. Tony Blair offered one to the Irish for Britain's inaction during the Potato Famine; Bill Clinton delivered another to black Americans for slavery. Surely no good can come from such empty sentimentalism.

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Or can it? In 1993, Bill Clinton formally apologized to native Hawaiians for the U.S. military's role in forcibly ousting Queen Liliuokalani from power in 1893. Bill's blubbery *mea culpa* appears to have awakened some old grievances and sparked calls for Hawaiian independence. On September 20, the *Washington Times* reported that "the apology encouraged a spate of Hawaiian sovereignty movements."

Keaki Keali, a native Hawaiian living near the site of Capt. James Cook's initial landing in 1778, puts it plainly: "We should be completely independent. . . . They took it away from us by force and we should get it back."

Keali has a point. America's absorption of Hawaii is hardly a proud moment in our history. Disturbed by Queen Liliuokalani's desire for a stronger monarchy (and enticed by the benefits annexation would bring to the American-controlled Hawaiian sugar industry) a group of planter-class American expatriates formed a Committee of Public Safety and overthrew the queen in 1893. The American minister, John L. Stevens, backed the coup with troops from the U.S.S. *Boston*.

Shortly after the coup, President Grover Cleveland took over from pro-annexation lame duck Benjamin Harrison. Cleveland refused to countenance the annexation of Hawaii, stating: "I mistake the Americans if they favor the odious doctrine that there is no such thing as international morality; that there is one law for a strong nation and another for a weak one." Cleveland's behavior in this incident reaffirms H.L. Mencken's assessment of him as "a good man in a bad trade." It was left to a lesser man, Cleveland's expansionist Republican successor, William McKinley, to accept annexation in 1898.

The annexation of Hawaii was the first in a series of defeats by a formidable coalition of anti-imperialists that fought U.S. expansionism around the turn of the century. That coalition was broad enough to include millionaire industrialist Andrew Carnegie, former Union General and mugwump Carl Schurz, *Nation* editor E.L. Godkin, and AFL leader Samuel Gompers. The 1899 platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League reveals the distinctively American principles which were able to unite such a disparate group: "The policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free . . . We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed . . . We cordially invite the co-operation of all men and women who remain loyal to the declaration of independence and the constitution of the United States."

Independence for Hawaii would right an historical wrong and give a belated victory to the anti-imperialists. And it would benefit Americans on the mainland as well. Hawaii's statehood is an expansionist abomination. It's no coincidence that our only two noncontiguous states were admitted to the union in 1959, at the height of Cold War globalism. Disgorging Hawaii could be the first step in reversing a century's worth of imperialist overreach.

Alas, the idea of Hawaiian independence is probably little more than a pleasant pipe dream. U.S. officials are already planning to buy off disgruntled Hawaiians with federal loot. Interior and Justice Department officials have suggested that subsidies for better schools and health care for native Hawaiians may aid "the process of reconciliation." But if the more hard-core Hawaii Firsters don't get their way, they may see the merit in taking the struggle to the U.S. mainland, with assassination squads and car bombs. If the Puerto Rican precedent is any indication, there might be an eventual pardon waiting for them.

—*Gene Healy*

THE NEW MILLENNIUM is still a year away, but in London, as elsewhere, the moment appointed for its celebration is that marked by the first appearance of those three mystically consecutive zeros in the calendar. Turnstiles at the vast Millennium Dome are oiled and ready to spin on January 1: click, click, click. Rather more zeros, of course, figure in the price the nation has paid for an architectural extravagance that our political masters have ordered built as a monument to their ambition. The bill for the biggest covered space in the world has been billions—though it would be churlish to include in that sum the banknotes which wallpaper the part of the Dome which is explicitly dedicated to the celebration of wealth: They are on loan from the Bank of England and must later be returned for practical use. And, until recently, another zero, solitary and unqualified, would have summed up the Dome's planned contents, for the bubble was almost fully blown before anyone had an idea of what to put in it.

Nevertheless, to the government's relief, commercial participants eventually came forward to sponsor the various sections of the Dome. Tesco, a supermarket chain, has stumped up for what is called the "Learning Zone." Here, with unconscious irony, visitors are reminded of whatever schooling they might once have had by an evocation of its most memorable elements: the recorded sound of bellowing teachers and the artificial smell of over-boiled cabbage. Another "educational" experience that visitors will enjoy for their £20 admission charge will be the chance to admire (but not read) "The 1,000 Greatest Books Ever" assembled behind a great glass-screened bookcase. Mindful that academics are busily engaged in meeting all those educational "targets" that the government has set them, Tesco has sportingly left them out of the selection process and appealed directly to their customers to vote for their favorite books. This survey produced a list of "books that people actually read, rather than those we pretend to read, or wish we had read," said the company's spokesman. (Why people should want to pay £20 to admire the spines of books with which they are already familiar is a question he was not asked.) And the 1,000 best books? A workshop manual for the Ford Sierra. *How to Build a Perfect Golf Swing. The Owners' Guide to Dog Health. Goldfish & Koi.* The autobiography of Joan Collins. Guides to gardening, home improvement, and cookery. So much for learning in National Post-Socialist Britain.

On, then (but not up), to the "Spirit Level," that bubble within a bubble, with a title surely more apt than its inventor can have imagined. There, matters spiritual are leveled indeed, in an all-inclusive ragbag of a multifaith experience featuring the bells, smells, and mantras of as many faiths as could be found, each demeaned by the presence of the others. The official religion of the major millennial basilica itself is more elevating. Three times a day, visitors are called to lift their eyes heavenward to see its mysteries played out by 80 acrobats whose ritualized movements "tell the story of humanity" 150 feet above their heads in a "very symbolic" struggle between nature and technology, which is resolved when each embraces the other—as they do, we

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are to believe, in the creation of the Dome itself.

Such humanistic pseudoliturgical twaddle is complemented by the statues offered for reverence in this extravagant temple of trash. Bestriding the "Body Zone" like a castrated, colostomised colossus is a vast, faceless, raceless, androgynous humanoid, a representation of a humanity so politically corrected that all can recognize themselves in it without taking offense. Whether the 14-foot-high boy cowering in the shadow of this idol is supposed to be in awe of it, or, as his expression and posture seem to suggest, has simply been surprised at stool, need trouble only the most inquisitive student of contemporary sculpture.

This carbuncular, introspective, and vacuous monument to transience, this theme park without a theme, serves no purpose but to glorify our godless contemporary subculture and the politicians who preside over it. Englishmen in search of an uplifting experience on the scale promised by the dome-mongers would do better to spend their money on a cross-channel ferry ticket and admission to the Eiffel Tower. Those with access to traditional liturgy would be even better advised to stay at home and go to church.

—*Michael McMahon*

OBITER DICTA: Plans are under way for the third annual *Chronicles*/Rockford Institute Summer School. Come join our growing band of regulars at our Rockford campus July 18-22, 2000, to examine the thought of the ancient Greeks. In addition to Dr. **Thomas Fleming**, the faculty will include Fr. **Hugh Barbour**, O. Praem., prior of Saint Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California, and Dr. **Paul Gottfried**, professor of history at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania. The sessions will provide students with a better understanding of America's debt to ancient Greek philosophy, culture, and politics, and will include a special lecture on the art of war in ancient Greece.

The Third Annual Summer School will be preceded by an optional half-day workshop on July 18 designed especially for homeschooling parents and private-school teachers. The theme of the workshop will be "Why it's necessary to teach classical languages and how to do it right." Look for details on both the summer school and the workshop in future issues of *Chronicles*.

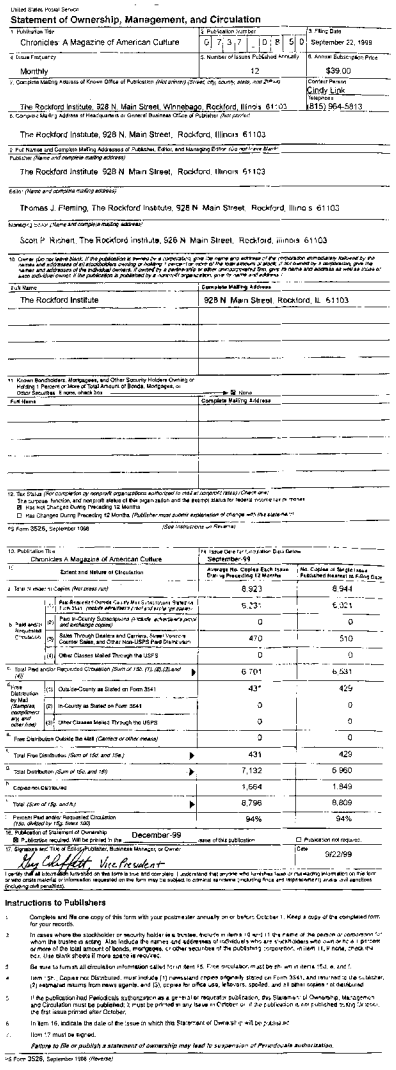
Our poet this month is **Thomas Paul De Witt** of Cary, North Carolina. A copywriter and consultant with 20 years of experience in fundraising and marketing management, Mr. De Witt holds a B.A. in political science from North Carolina State University.

Our art this month is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.

BOOK OF NEXT MONTH

Our book for next month is *The Quest for Community*, by Richard M. Weaver Award winner Robert Nisbet, a founding member of the board of directors of The Rockford Institute. First published in 1962 and still in print today, *The Quest for Community* is a rare example of an American conservative book that gets to the heart of an important subject: the loss of real community and the frightening attempts by utopians to create a substitute.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP



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H. Ward Sterett

X2K: *aut Christus aut nihil*

by Thomas Fleming

"Put Christ back in Xmas" was the slogan of a popular campaign to cloak America's prime commercial holiday with Christian decency. Its promoters meant well, of course, even though the offending "X" was nothing other than the Greek letter *chi*, the first letter of *Christos*, and a common symbol both for Christ and the cross.

Considering the condition of our seminaries, Christian ministers can scarcely be blamed for their ignorance of Greek and theology, but some pastors might do well to focus a little less on politics and social issues and a little more on putting the "X" back into the lives of their flocks. We heard a great deal in 1999 about the looming menace of Y2K and Bill Clinton's planned declaration of martial law. Right-wing groups were hawking generators, water purifiers, and emergency bags of gold coins.

It is not that some concern over the collapse of the world's information system is not justified or that there is anything wrong in making a buck off human gullibility—that is the American way since Simon Suggs turned from poker to religion and repented well enough to make off with the camp meeting's receipts. Suggs was walking in the footsteps of his namesake Simon Magus, who, after teaming up with a prostitute, went into the miracles trade. Magus's act was called "the Power of God Called Great" and his "First Holy Idea." He feigned baptism and tried to bribe the apostles into teaching him the gig of the Holy Ghost, until the other Simon showed him up for a fraud.

It seems to be our fate to pay attention to the wrong Simons. A hundred years after Simon Magus, one Peregrinus, a known patricide and seducer, turned Christian. As a secular convert with an intellectual pedigree, he was immediately welcomed by the faithful, and, by courting persecution, he quickly rose to the top until he was caught, apparently, eating food offered to idols. He went on to win fame as an itinerant Cynic whose final con was to have himself burnt alive as a sign of his divinity.

Lucian, skeptic and mocker that he was, felt pity for the poor Christians who had been so easily taken in by this transparent humbug. Eighteen centuries of frauds and impostors have made us scarcely more cautious. Today, it is not the quiet parish priest or Calvinist good shepherd who wins respect by preaching the Gospel and ministering to broken hearts, but the empire builders in flash suits, who preach the joy of doom from behind drum sets or in front of TV screens where the altar of God used to be, the priests who lead their flock to Medjugorje to be fleeced, and the well-fed hierarchy of mainline churches, who claim to be Christian while denying the Incarnation and encouraging women to murder their unborn babies.

Conservative Christians do a better job of clinging to the essentials of the faith, but as Y2K approaches, the hysteria over power supplies and mass looting drowns out any quiet voice talking about what the year 2001 represents, which is the symbolic anniversary of 20 centuries of Christ and the Christian faith on earth. Yes, of course, the date is probably off by several years, but Christian holidays are not scientifically determined dates: They are occasions for worship, reverence, and reflection. Instead of reflecting on 2,000 years of Christ among us, we are sucked into the familiar Gnostic fantasies which Eusebius traced all the way back to the Magus: an obsession with the end of the world, a desire for power and success, a willful refusal to see in man and nature a reflection of the Creator's intentions, a preference for vulgar exhibitionism over the dignity of liturgical traditions that go back to the earliest days of the Church.

How did we get snookered into playing this anti-Christian game? Conspiracy theories are not necessary when so many Christians and most conservatives are playing for the other side most of the time, concentrating their efforts on putting prayer back in schools instead of on dismantling the public school system; or on cracking down on pornographic television instead of turning their families and friends away from movies and television and toward the cultural inheritance that is awaiting them if

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they ever learn to read and think.

I am telling Christians something that many of them know already somewhere in their hearts, that American culture has replaced Christ and St. Nicholas with the cargo cult of Santa Claus who drops relief packages down chimneys and has reduced weddings to the level of Las Vegas productions—part high-school prom and part *Dating Game* episode—complete with theme decorations, smutty anecdotes, and program listings that tell you who the contestants are.

Some Christians seem to realize that Marxism and feminism, environmentalism and Scientology have functioned as surrogates for the religion that has been displaced by consumerism, but no one seems to have noticed the proliferation of anti-Christian sects that are sucking in disgruntled Americans, left and right.

Consider the growing cult of UFOs and extraterrestrials, made popular by anti-Christian films like Steven Spielberg's *ET* and *Close Encounters* and by anti-Christian pseudoscientists like Carl Sagan. Sagan regarded Christianity as an absurd superstition. God and his angels cannot exist, said the great scientist whose contributions to astronomy were nil, but somewhere out there is a race of beings infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely long-lived—no, not "gods" but spacemen. If it sounds like science, then it cannot be a religion, and Sagan gulled who knows how many people into contributing to his project for establishing communication with ETI (extraterrestrial intelligence).

The June issue of *Discovery* magazine reports on the scheme of Jean-Marc Philippe, a Paris "artist," who is filling a satellite with letters from second millennium earthlings. The letters are addressed both to future generations of humans and to ETIs. Among the messages reciting the usual school lessons on violence and pollution, one young woman expressed her desire "to kiss your intelligence with mine," while another girl waxed even more mystical: "O, extraterrestrial, I know you, it is you who are in the silence between the notes of my music."

Those who cannot reach for the stars or project into the future may content themselves with powerful creatures of the distant past who bring joy into our boring world. I mean, of course, dinosaurs. The Christian Beowulf died fighting a dragon, "the enemy of mankind," which joylessly hoarded the wealth that gladdened the hearts of Germanic warriors. Today, our children are taught to worship monsters of far less human interest. When I was young, my cousin made me memorize the names and attributes of all the major dinosaurs. It was only much later when, in a class on Greek sculpture, I had to learn the names and attributes of gods and heroes (a club and lionskin meant Hercules) that I realized my cousin had inducted me into a cult.

Dinosaurs are not kindly gods or even mischievous elves; they are more like Lovecraft's "Old Ones." And the Rex of this antediluvian pantheon was the most terrible of the terror lizards. What a moral lesson is being taught by the public schools and museums that devote billions of dollars to bringing back the Old Ones of the Jurassic age! Movies do a good job of spreading the cult of anarchic violence to a public impatient with scientific nomenclature. Again, Spielberg is the reliable anti-Christian who made *Jurassic Park* into a cult movie.

Film and TV are a key to understanding popular religion. While Christian clergymen are portrayed as either con artists or buffoons, Eastern holy men are wise beyond our poor Western understanding; so are children and animals. Disney's *Tarzan* is only the latest Disney film to encourage animal worship.

Edward Rothstein let the cat out of Mickey's bag this summer when he pointed out in the *New York Times* (July 15) that Disney heroes were almost always "outsiders" and minority figures who challenge the assumptions of mainstream culture. While older Disney films focused on opening up America to outsiders, the concept of an American mainstream has disappeared in the age of Eisner, and along with it the distinctions between Western and non-Western, human and subhuman.

Disney is also frequently cited for blurring the distinction between straight and gay, and one of the established religions of the new United States is the worship of AIDS. Hindus in India have already set up a temple to the AIDS goddess, and American filmmakers are not far behind, celebrating the AIDS patient as a suffering servant touched by a power beyond human understanding. People with cancer simply die a painful and often disgusting death. Death from AIDS is a martyrdom experienced by those courageous few who have broken through the barriers of nature and sanity. In Hollywood, the AIDS patient is Oscar Wilde and Charley Parker and William Burroughs all rolled into one self-destroying hipster who is not, in fact, man enough to take life straight, without needles or necrophilia.

The right-wing response to Disney and Spielberg is either to celebrate their business acumen (hoping wistfully that they would act more responsibly) or to blame the Jews who control Hollywood. Many years ago, I was told that if I wished to write for conservatives, I would have to push one of two buttons: greed or bigotry. I disagreed, confident that there was a serious tradition of conservative thought that had appeal for hundreds of thousands of educated Americans. Perhaps I was naive.

On the point of spilling over into the next millennium, the American right has split into two channels, the one calling for tax breaks for the wealthy, world markets, and world government; the other, ringing the changes on white identity, Jew-baiting, and apartheid. Back in the early Reagan years, a racialist of my acquaintance used to bore the guests at Washington cocktail parties with his usual obsession. On one occasion, someone tried to bring the conversation to a close, asking: "So for you, it comes down to God, country, and race—is that about it?"

"Blank the Lord," came the racialist's answer. "Race is the whole ball of wax."

In his own way, the scientific racist was right: A man cannot be a patriot, much less a Christian, if he sees the whole world reflected in the fun-house mirror of racial theory. The racialist's problem is not that he acknowledges racial differences. It is scarcely a crime to argue that the sun rises in the East or that the Nordic nations of Europe were incapable of inventing a humane civilization, which in any case they gave up at the same time as they were giving up Christianity. Race may partly explain the barbarism of Scandinavia (as compared with, say, Greece and Sicily), but for the racialist, however moderate and sensible he may be in the beginning, race always becomes "the whole ball of wax," and he will ride to the moon and back on his little hobby horse, only to stumble and fall as soon as he dismounts on the level ground of everyday life.

Racialists may speak the language of nationalism, but, for the most part, they hate this mongrel nation. It is not simply that they wish to preserve the historic America, as Jean Raspail wants to preserve France, and extend the same courtesy to Mexicans, Cambodians, and Muslims from the Middle East. No, without knowing any more of Mexico than can be gleaned from the

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menu in Chi Chi's, they despise Mexicans, whom they lump together with Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Brazilians into the general category of "wetbacks."

These bourgeois obsessions, by themselves, do not especially trouble me. I was brought up to believe that it is ungentlemanly, if not unmanly, to pry into other people's motives. But I prefer to see racialism for what it is: A search for a tribal cult to displace the religion of two millennia that has contaminated Europe, so they insist, by its semiticism.

It is tempting to describe the race cult as neopagan, but that would be an insult to Alain de Benoist, a humane intellectual engaged in the painful pursuit of truth. In the most recent issue of *éléments*, he and his collaborators address the question "*Avec ou sans Dieu*," complaining that many people have confused his "pagan" inquest into European origins with mere atheism or materialism. But the basis of American racialism is nothing but "matérialisme de fond"; it shows no inclination toward what *éléments* calls "an archeological passion for the origins and popular traditions of European civilization, an aesthetic taste for the beauty of the world or the harmony of nature, a philosophical reflection on Being and the diversity of its manifestations." Scientific racism is, in terms of both civilization and humanity, a dead end, like positivism or socialism or "the social gospel," and Christians and Jews who attach themselves to such a creed are as gullible as the followers of Simon Magus and as doomed as the Gnostics he inspired.

Racism is, in other words, just another cult to distract us from the faith. In the same special number of *éléments*, Massimo Introvigne, a Catholic expert on cults, points out that deracinated people—immigrants in particular—are prone to fall for New Age cults. Those who are not rooted in a real and lived tradition—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, even secular, says Introvigne—"run a great risk of straying into the spiritual paths artificially constructed by the modern world."

America is the one country that has made a virtue of deracination, with disastrous results. Introvigne was thinking primarily of Polish immigrants in France who join Jehovah's Witnesses, but he could be describing the Ellis Island Americans who fall for Scientology or the equally deracinated Plymouth Rockers who are running into the arms of racial scientology. I can imagine the response which the Christian Simon or one of the prophets would make to the advocates of a white American renaissance.

"White folks of America, know this: Your world is gone, because you and your parents and probably your grandparents cared only for money and comfort. You flooded your country with cheap alien labor, and your government schools kept the immigrants' children ignorant and coarse. Your political leaders pandered to the lowest level of Irish bootleggers and turned one of them into the American King Arthur. You watered, sugared, and adulterated the rich wine of your religion until it was indistinguishable from the Coke and Kool-Aid of the Boy Scout Oath and the Four-Way Test. You contented yourself with cheap books, cheap music, and cheap booze, and your American civilization, just as it was rising to the level of an English market town, collapsed 100 years ago, driving its brightest spirits into exile. Now you want to whine and blame the Jews, blame the coloreds, blame the Mexicans. Grow up and blame yourselves. Perhaps then you just might begin the slow and painful process of rerooting yourself in the real traditions of the West."

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DICTATIONS

"This Strange Disease of Modern Life"

How long have we been modern men, living in modern times, experiencing the trials of modernity and modernization? What self-obsession! Although the people of any brilliant age—Elizabethan England, France under Louis XIV, Augustan Rome—tend to exercise their bragging rights too freely, none of them went on, generation after generation, talking about itself in this way.

What does it mean to be modern, anyway? The clue is to be found in the word "modernization," the process by which men left the plow or put down the adze and went to town to take up work in a factory, abandoning their religion in favor of a trade union, movies, and a daily newspaper, and dreaming of the day they could pack the whole thing in—wife, kids, job—and live off Social Security in Florida.

To be modern, in other words, is to be rational, rootless, and above all restless because modernity is always redefining itself. It is idle to speak of anything as "postmodern" because the irrationalism and ethnic or gender yahooism of the postmodernists is easily absorbed by modernity. As Chesterton said of progress, modern is "simply a comparative of which we have not settled the superlative."

Etymology tells the tale. Late Latin *modernus*, formed from *modo* ("presently," "now," or "lately") on analogy with *hodiernus* (from hodie, "today") meant something like "pertaining to the present time." By the end of the 18th century, it was commonly used to contrast the writers and artists of the Renaissance and after with those of the ancient world, and the Battle of the Books was, of course, a struggle between ancient and modern authors. But in an age of widespread Latinity, "modern" could not entirely escape its ultimate origin, the word *modus*, "measure," which came to mean "manner" or "fashion," hence "mode" and "modish" in English. The Enlightenment made modernists of us all, conservatives and liberals alike. Roger Scruton sums up Hegel's analysis of modern man as "the character who holds history before himself and himself before history and reflects upon whether the two are in harmony."

As early as the 16th century, "modern" can imply up-to-date or even trendy—Shakespeare even seems to use it in the sense of "everyday" or "commonplace"—and that is ultimately the real meaning of modernity: the obsession with being fashionable coupled with a repudiation of the past. Big Bill Broonzy, in one of his talking blues songs, tells of seeing a man throwing his clothes out the window. Asked what he is doing, the man tells Bill that all those clothes "by the time they hits the ground they'll be out of style." That man was a true modernist, willing to destroy what is useful simply for the sake of fashion and change. "Ending is better than mending. Ending is better than mending."

—Humpty Dumpty

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New Faiths for Old

How Matthew Shepard Replaced Jesus Christ

by Philip Jenkins

H. Ward Sterett

Religion is a very sturdy creature. For two centuries, various atheist regimes have tried to eliminate religious practice in their societies and, without exception, have ended up restoring the forms of the old worship, but with newer and far lamer excuses. The French revolutionaries who tried to free their subjects from the curse of Christianity created an ersatz New Age religion with the feast of the Supreme Being before giving in wholeheartedly to a messianic belief in the Great Nation and its mystical personification in the Emperor Napoleon. Still more sweeping were the dechristianizing efforts of the Soviets, who massacred countless priests and religious and secularized or destroyed places of worship. Yet for half a century, all the public rituals of that society took place under icons of Lenin, whose venerated remains served as the supreme relic and justification of the communist order. As G.K. Chesterton remarked, when people abandon the belief in God, it is not true that they believe in nothing, but rather that they will believe in anything and everything, however ludicrous or lethal.

These precedents may seem singularly inappropriate for the United States, where religious belief and practice are not only perfectly legal, but also flourish to a degree unique among the advanced nations. As has often been noted, however, American religion in the 20th century became increasingly polarized along class lines, so that the nation's elites either discounted matters of faith or else viewed them as a subset of liberal political ideology. For the better-off and educated Americans, at least, we can speak in the famous terms of Matthew Arnold, who observed how the sea of faith "was once at the full, and round earth's shore / lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled / But now I only hear its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar / retreating." Or to be more exact, instead of a melancholy roar, we hear today a perpetual nagging whine against any form of religious expression which does not conform to liberal tenets, which must be dismissed as a form of fundamentalism, fanaticism, bigotry, or any other characteristics attributed to the "religious right."

For all intents and purposes, American elites are thoroughly secularized, and yet, like the atheist rulers of past societies, they hold passionately to systems of belief which are in fact profoundly religious. To a striking degree, moreover, these ideologies are, *horresco referens*, substantially Christian. This continuity from past beliefs need not surprise us too greatly: Centuries of cultural conditioning are not abandoned overnight, and certainly not unless some very powerful rival ideology is substituted. Yet the adherents of some widely held secular philosophies would be thoroughly surprised and appalled if they ever explored the underlying roots of their beliefs.

Many of our modern non-religions grow out of the psychoanalytical tradition. Psychoanalysis was created by that old cabalistic shaman Sigmund Freud, who navigated the dreamquests of his hapless followers. The movement was cultivated

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by the amazing Carl Gustav Jung, who operated unabashedly on the classic model of a cult leader, complete with solar rituals and the language of secret brotherhoods: Anyone wishing to understand the thoroughly mystical and charismatic roots of psychoanalysis should begin with two eye-opening books by Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult* (Princeton University Press, 1994) and *The Aryan Christ* (Random House, 1997).

Through much of the 20th century, psychoanalysis was a cult wonderland of competing gurus each offering the only true religion. Writing in the *American Sociological Review* in 1936, the famous sociologist Read Bain described the movement purely in terms of pathological religious cults. Like the worst cults, psychoanalysis had

> a revered, almost sacred, leader-symbol; it contains mystical elements which provide escape-mechanisms for many of its followers; its proponents and adherents often show delusions of persecution and grandeur; its opponents indulge in heresy-hunting and vitriolic condemnation; there are numerous bitter feuds and fanatic factions within the fold; symbolism, ritualism and logical confusion abound; it flourishes upon dogmatic denial of the ordinary postulates and methods of natural science.

Every word of this analysis applies forcefully to the therapeutic movements of the present day, the assumptions of which have so profoundly pervaded every aspect of popular culture.

Therapy, like Christianity, is deeply interested in the question of lost innocence and the means by which sin came into the world. Over the last two decades, this therapeutic obsession has been particularly apparent from the topic of sexual abuse, a subject which has come to be seen as the origin of every possible social ill and individual evil. Belief in the ubiquitous nature of abuse, whether in the form of incest, molestation, or rape, has given rise to the recovery movement, which can best be interpreted as a modern-day religious revival.

Thousands of therapists devote themselves to the lucrative business of inducing patients (usually female) to believe that they were victims of sexual abuse, despite a lack of corroborating evidence beyond some ill-defined symptoms which others might identify as accidental personality traits. As we are told in the bible of the modern recovery movement, *The Courage to Heal* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, "If you are unable to remember any specific instances . . . but still have a feeling that something abusive happened to you, it probably did. . . . If you think you were abused and your life shows the symptoms, then you were." Evidence from dreams was certainly valid testimony. Once identified as incest survivors, patients could confront their problems and begin a process of healing their "inner child," usually through self-help groups of comparable survivors. As skepticism was utterly discouraged in such a setting, it is scarcely surprising that the dreams and fantasies to which patients confessed were soon elaborated into lunatic tales of ritual abuse which implied that satanic cults were running rampant across modern America.

Though expressed in psychological terms of self-help, the recovery movement owed its strength and resilience to its pervasive religious quality. The treatment of incest survivors implies archaic themes like the loss of primal innocence through sexual sin and the recovery of an untarnished childlike state. Also recalling religious systems is the emphasis on faith, of belief in the testimony of others, even if it directly contradicts common sense: The children must be believed at all costs. As with any religion, survivorship implies a total worldview impervious to disproof or even challenge by conventional standards of evidence or rationality.

Equally familiar to the evangelical tradition, the restoration of innocence occurs in a sudden emotional moment of realization, which is essentially a conversion experience: Could such an ideology have been formulated anywhere but in post-Christian America? "I once was lost, but now am found / was blind, but now I see." The analogy is not perfect, since the survivor is realizing not her own lost and sinful state but the evil inflicted by a victimizer, but the underlying structure of loss, regeneration, and redemption is accurate. The difference is that evangelical conversion is followed by a lifelong sense of one's own sinful state, while incest recovery is founded on the power to cast unlimited blame on those other people believed responsible for the offense. Personal sin is thus replaced by the concept of victimization, individual sin by structural injustice, contrition by self-assertion. The recovery movement offers a staggeringly wrongheaded version of "Amazing Grace" which throughout substitutes the word "pride" for "grace": "it's pride has brought me safe thus far / and pride will lead me home." (Please, let nobody tell this to John Newton.) Christian it certainly is not, but the underlying substructure is incomprehensible unless seen in an evangelical context.

Incest recovery groups are one segment of a much more substantial phenomenon which has become a mainstay of the American scene since mid-century, namely the small-group movement, which ultimately owes its origin to Alcoholics Anonymous. No one can deny the immense good which AA has done for probably millions of individuals, but equally beyond contest is the thoroughly religious complexion of this movement. Curious as it may seem to the vast majority of AA participants, the movement's roots lie primarily in the Moral Rearmament movement of the 1930's and 1940's, the so-called Oxford Group, from which AA took no less than ten of its celebrated 12 steps.

By modern standards, the Oxford Group was a bizarre cult which utilized high-pressure gatherings culminating in intense outpourings of communal confession. These intrusive tactics foreshadowed the psychological methods for which cults and therapy sects would become notorious in later years. As most of the material confessed tended to be sexual in nature, critics were horrified at the image of young and well-to-do women publicly parading their most intimate secrets and fantasies. By the 1930's, the group's absolutist leader, Frank Buchman, was publicly advocating "a God-controlled fascist dictatorship." Whatever its later achievements, AA grows out of a cult movement. With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising to see the whole small-group ideology becoming an alternative religion. For many of its adherents, the recovery movement supplants their original faith traditions, so that concepts like "resurrection" hold power only insofar as they symbolize the individual's reawakening from past misbehaviors.

With the slightest probing, we usually find that Americans who claim not to be religious do in fact hold a wide if contradictory range of religious beliefs, usually with firm roots in the Christian or Jewish traditions. The charismatic power of revered or sacred individuals became obvious a decade or so back in the aftermath of the film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which many felt to be a blasphemous portrayal of Jesus's life.

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The controversy broke along predictable lines—religious conservatives versus liberal defenders of artistic freedom—until someone raised the telling question of what would happen if the media offered a demeaning picture of someone who was universally agreed to be a holy person, beyond taint or criticism. Jesus, clearly, did not fall into this category, nor did the arch-patriarchal nemesis John Paul II (and who cares about him anyway, except for a billion or so poor people?). The example most commonly offered for this role, the consensus choice for ultimate sanctity, was Martin Luther King, Jr., crucified for our sins in Memphis.

Though on nothing like the same messianic scale as King, a liberal hagiography has also emerged around numerous lesser figures. These are often associated with the civil-rights movement of the 1960's, but as recollections of that era fade for even the grayest of the baby boomers, a new generation of martyrs has emerged. In 1998, we witnessed the astonishingly potent cult surrounding Matthew Shepard, the young homosexual murdered in Wyoming. The crime was portrayed strictly in terms of martyrdom and Calvary, complete with the grotesque image of crucifixion on barbed wire. The rhetorical implications were hammered home repeatedly and unsubtly: We are all guilty for his death, we must purge such sins from ourselves and our communities, how thoroughly our whole culture is permeated by sin and ungodliness (sorry, I meant to say "by hate and homophobia"). The language came close to the apocalyptic warnings of national doom invoked by Abolitionists in the years before the Civil War: Woe unto us, miserable bigots that we are. Anyone who doubts that Americans retain a strong and even fanatical notion of blasphemy can be easily enlightened by making a slighting reference to the Shepard case in any liberal gathering, or by questioning whether Shepard's homosexuality was a factor in provoking the crime: Expect to encounter physical violence, or at least ostracism.

Americans believe in saints, martyrs, and Christ figures (if not Christ). They accept the notion of original sin, albeit in the perverse form of original abuse, and they hope for redemption through therapy: Recall the country lyric, "Looking for love in all the wrong places." In however warped a form, traditional Christian and particularly Protestant assumptions still have a very powerful resonance for Americans. This is important enough in understanding our social ideologies, but the idea is also crucial if we are to understand the kinds of political rhetoric which are going to appeal to an audience which mistakenly thinks of itself as secular but is actually imbued with biblical and apocalyptic assumptions. Only this can explain why secular liberals are so overwhelmed by King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which should properly be viewed as one of the great monuments of evangelical, and specifically Baptist, preaching.

And it also explains what so many find an impenetrable mystery: why Bill Clinton has gotten away with every blunder, crime, and mishap through both his seemingly unending terms as President. Has anyone ever succeeded so thoroughly in presenting such demagogic ideas, such improbable defenses, such contorted ideology, in the unctuous tones of secularized sermonizing? Witness his speech after the Oklahoma City bombing, a rhetorical masterpiece of its kind. Witness his language of crusades against hate and victimization, his constant harping on the idea of innocent children, his invocation of martyr figures. His continued survival shows that he knows his audience very well indeed.

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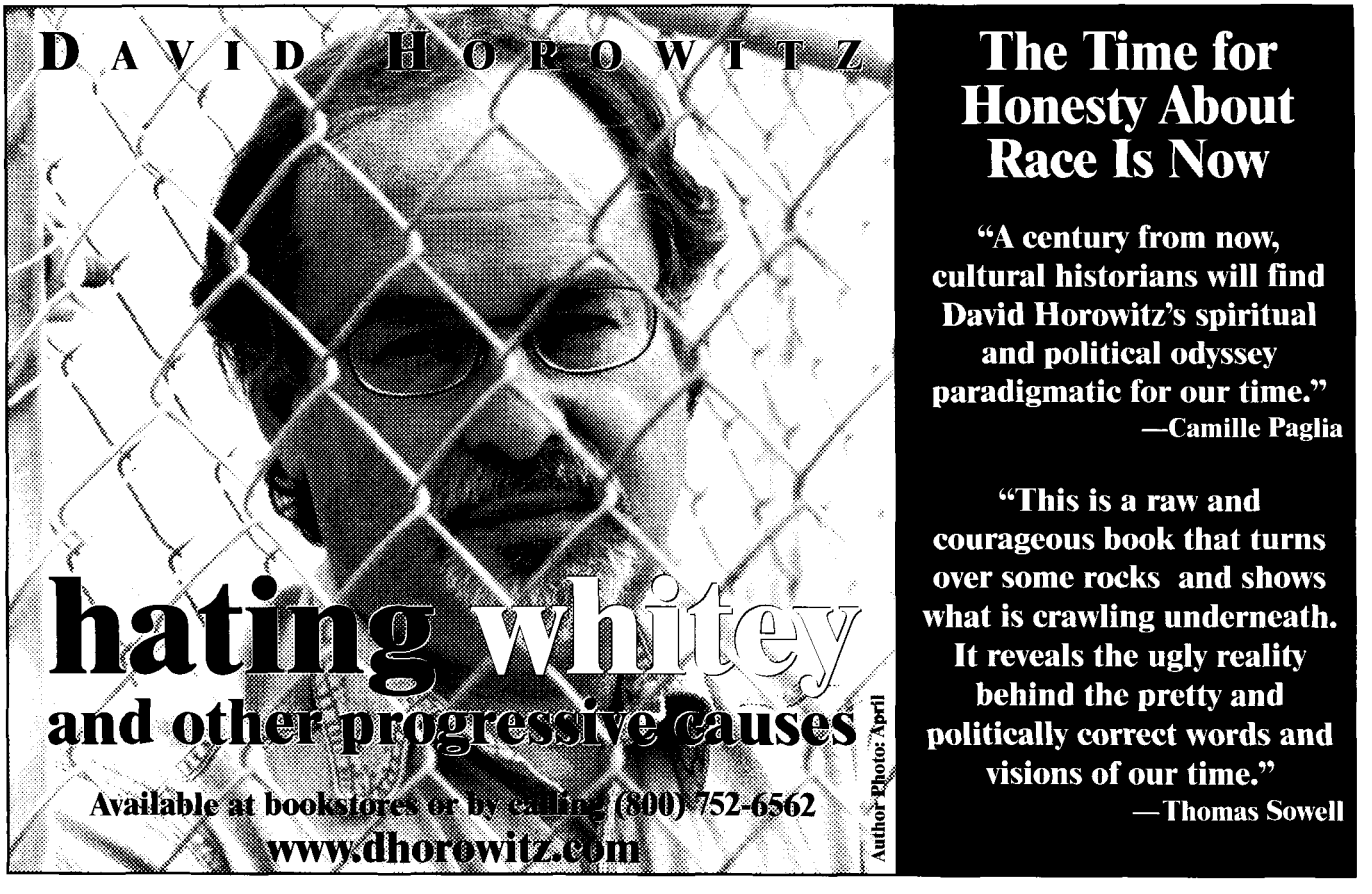
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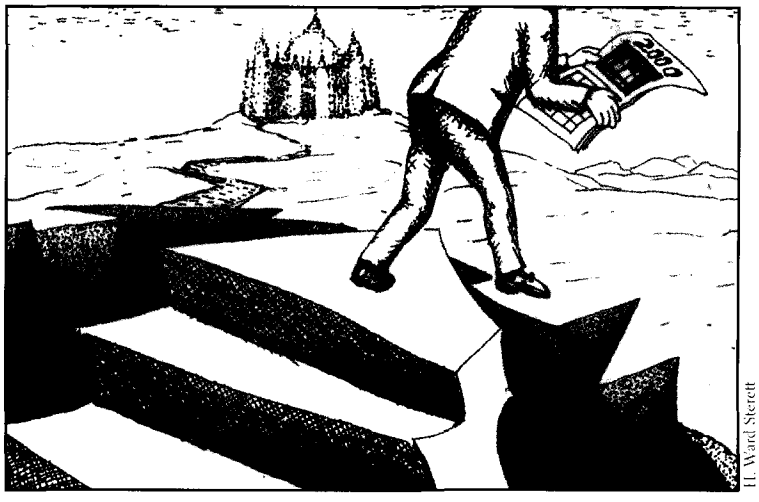
The Coming of the Third Age

Next Month: Utopia

by Harold O.J. Brown



H. Ward Sterett

In the early winter of 1999, much of the world is looking forward with eager anticipation or uneasy apprehension to the dawning of the Third Millennium. It is the third millennium A.D., of course, the beginning of the third thousand of the Years of the Lord, and thus directly relevant only to those of us who count from the birth of Jesus Christ. A Muslim, Jew, or Hindu would not see the same millennial significance in our A.D. 2000, but the computer has universalized the world's dating and with it the significance of that date as the digits roll from 12/31/99 to 01/01/00.

Fifty years ago, we lived passably well without computers and probably could do so again, if it becomes necessary. Are there other reasons for the anticipation tinged with foreboding with which so many regard the end of this second millennium? Are we not merely at the end of the years whose designation starts with the numeral 1, but at the beginning of something new, a New World Order perhaps? Or is it possible that we are actually approaching the End of the Age, the Last Day of biblical prophecy? Christians have been told to expect that Last Day but not to try to predict when it will break in on us. The disciples asked Jesus more than once, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus's parting words warned them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). Earlier he had instructed them, in effect, to "Keep busy until I come."

In light of these admonitions, I am not prepared to offer any predictions about the End of the Age in the sense of that Last Day, and certainly not any based on calendars or computers. But what about signs of a lesser change to something different—better perhaps, or worse—the dawn of Utopia or of a Brave New World?

In the late spring of 1959, the world was temporarily more or less at peace. The Hungarian revolt had been suppressed by the forces of the Soviet Union. World War II had been over for almost 15 years, the Chinese civil war for ten. The independent state of Israel was also ten years old. The Republic of China, licking its wounds and still claiming to be the legitimate government of the mainland, had withdrawn across the water to Taiwan before the victorious Chinese People's Republic. There was an uneasy peace in Korea and Indochina, and most of Africa was still under colonial rule. The Council of Chalcedon, which for orthodox Christians of every confession defined Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as fully divine and fully human, had just passed its 1500th anniversary, and Billy Graham was well into his worldwide evangelistic ministry. It was a middle, neither an end nor a beginning.

Those were the external conditions under which I was given the opportunity to deliver the little oration called the Graduate

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Part at the Harvard University Commencement. My eight-minute address was entitled "The Coming of the Third Age." I used the vision of a 12th-century Italian friar, Joachim of Floris, to suggest that our world might once again be on the verge of a momentous transformation beyond our power to anticipate or plan.

Joachim believed that there was a first age, the age of the Father, which had passed into the second age, that of the Son, which in turn was drawing to an end, to be followed by a third and final age, that of the Holy Spirit. In this third age, people would no longer need to be taught by priests, for it was to be as the prophet Jeremiah said: "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD" (Jer. 31:34). The Spirit of God would rule in the hearts of men, and the tutelage of the priesthood would no longer be necessary.

After Joachim's death (ca. 1202), some of his disciples calculated that the dawning of his new age would come in the year 1260, but the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, whom they had envisaged as the Antichrist of the Last Days, died in 1250.

The Joachite vision faded, but men have continued to hope and expect a new age, an age when mankind will somehow rise to a new stage of perfection, when tables of stone or the pages of the Book will be superseded and man will be able to know all truths on his own.

While for Joachim the priesthood was to become dispensable because the Holy Spirit would instruct each believer personally, his successors began to think in terms of the autonomy of the human spirit. Thus theirs soon came to be a secular third age, a vision of Utopia created by enlightened, self-taught human beings. G.E. Lessing (1729-1781) thought that the race was on the threshold of maturity, about to free itself, as his contemporary Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) would write, from its self-imposed immaturity. In *The Education of the Human Race* (1780), Lessing announced the dawn of a third age of Reason, when neither the commanding Law of Joachim's age of the Father nor the Gospel of love of the age of the Son would be necessary any longer. In this third age, man's reason would lead him into all truth. Unfortunately for Lessing's vision, the triumph of Reason in the heartland of the Enlightenment, France, would soon plunge that nation into the insane carnage of the Reign of Terror.

The idea that there are three ages in history and that we are standing at the dawn of the third has arisen more than once. Could it be true now? Human efforts to understand history have tended to see trends in threes, and history up to the present offers some basis for it. There have been three Romes: Rome itself, Constantinople, and Moscow. There have been three "millennial" empires. Rome lasted from 753 B.C. until it was extinguished in the West in A.D. 476. Its successor state, the Holy Roman Empire inaugurated under Charlemagne in A.D. 800, also endured for almost exactly a millennium, in one form or another, until it was shut down by Napoleon in 1806. When Bismarck proclaimed the establishment of the German empire in 1870, it was seen as another "second" empire, the successor to the empire of Charlemagne. But unlike Charlemagne's, it lasted only 48 years. And 15 years later, in 1933, there was a third.

Hitler's "Third Reich," proclaimed as the "Thousand Years' Reich," drew both consciously and unconsciously on the "third age" and "third empire" themes of the past. From one perspective it could be seen as the successor to the first and second German empires of Charlemagne and Bismarck, but from another and more millennial perspective, as the successor to *Roma*

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aeterna and the Holy Roman Empire.

Communist Russia's dream of becoming the center of a new world civilization appears to have foundered with the breakup of the Soviet empire in 1991, 927 years short of a millennium. Hitler's vision turned to nightmare and ended in blood and ashes after only 12 years. Thus this last century of our millennium has seen two very fast false starts as far as a third age is concerned. Our own new American republic, proclaiming itself the *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, the New Order of the Ages, began less pretentiously and has lasted longer, with 777 years to go until its millennium.

President George Bush evoked dreams of a New World Order in 1991, the last decade of this millennium, but once the Gulf War ended, he said nothing more about it. In his successful campaign against Bush, Bill Clinton evoked utopian ideas, calling for "the courage to change" and promising a New Covenant. He did not call his covenant *third*, but his use of the biblical expression intentionally or unintentionally evoked quasi-religious images of another New Age, as different from the present age as the New Testament is from the Old.

In the last year of this old millennium, strange events have begun to unfold. The Cold War is over—won, we say—and the victors are up to something, perhaps to more than they themselves realize. NATO, a defensive alliance forged to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union, has been reconfigured as, in the words of a French journal, "a vehicle of American hegemony." Was its war against Yugoslavia the first battle for a new and different kind of empire? The world has become globalized, we are told. The same computers that cause us to fear 01/01/00 link every tribe and nation into one earth-encompassing internet. The surface of the earth, covered with the zoösphere of human and animal life, is now being covered, to use Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's term, with a noösphere, but a mechanical one, not spiritual as he envisaged. It is not the increasing mental activity of man that will cover the entire earth in a mental net; the emerging noösphere may be a kind of mechanical universal Mind made up of all of the interlocking computers of the world.

Are we at the dawn of One New World? There is no declared human candidate for emperor, no nation that will admit to seeking world hegemony. One nation, ours, appears to have at least some inclination in that direction, and our President seems to be appointed (or self-appointed) to exercise an office once reserved for God, that of *rerum mundi moderator*, the moderator of all the affairs of the world. On the other side of the Earth, a vast people, four times as numerous as ours, is determined to prevent that from happening. The eyes of the world are fixed upon Israel and Jerusalem, where the plan of God and the schemes of man have intersected in the past. Will Jerusalem once again be "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24)? For the first time in human history, it is possible to envisage an Armageddon in which the combatants number not thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions, but hundreds of millions, as in the imagery of the books of Daniel and of Revelation.

As we approach the turn of the millennium, we have heard or endured a series of predictions of a new order and attempts to erect it. From Lessing's naively optimistic expectations of mature human reason in *The Education of the Human Race* through America's ambitious but non-revolutionary *Novus Ordo Seclorum* to Bismarck's Second and Hitler's Third Reich, the human vision of a new order has become progressively more secular and, alas, more awful. Are we on the threshold of another and more universal New World Order, ruled not by the mind of God, but by the universal mechanical Mind of all the world's computers?

Human attempts to create a utopia, a new order, a Third Reich, a new Communist Man have proved not merely vain but devastatingly dreadful in the inversion of their stated goals. Paul warns of those who, "Professing themselves to be wise . . . became fools" (Romans 1:22). Will our kinder, gentler pursuit of ever grander and more vainglorious dreams bring us to a climactic Third Age in the third millennium? Utopia is not possible, for man determined to force its birth becomes a monster—perhaps literally, as a genetically engineered, cloned New Man. In 1914, just before the *belle époche* disappeared in fire and smoke, the poet Stefan George warned:

> You felons are the first to murder God,
> Carve out an idol not resembling Him,
> Hailed by sweet names, and hideous as no other
> You hurl the best you have into its jaws.

Christians all over the world offer the Lord's Prayer countless times every day. It has the petition, "Thy kingdom come." As we celebrate, or merely observe (as the case may be), for the last time in a year numbered 1---, the birth of the One after whom our years are numbered, we can both hope and pray that if there is to be a Third Age, it will be more like Joachim's Third Age of the Holy Spirit than like any modern messiah's Third Age of the Religion of Man. C

Bleeding in Gray Shadows

by Thomas Paul De Witt

I find my soul
In the composition
Of shadows.

A brush of gray,
A sparkle of white,
A dark boom
Anchoring
My center.

So solid, so rigid,
So amber and so bled,
To touch a vein so tender
And bleed forevermore.

Drained, I fold.
Only to stand tall
In the shadow of God.

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Banking on Boris

by Sergey Berdyaev

On Wednesday, September 1, a homemade bomb exploded on the third level of the Manezh Square underground shopping mall—dubbed "Luzhkov's pyramid" by critics of the Moscow mayor's taste in architecture—in the heart of Russia's ancient capital, only yards away from the red brick walls of the Kremlin. Forty-one people were injured, but none thus far (as of the second week in September) has died as a result of the terrorist attack. That same week, with mobs of clashing protesters—divided over the results of regional elections—gathering daily in the North Caucasian region's capital, a call from Karachay-Cherkessiya's leading citizens was made to Boris Yeltsin: appoint magnate (and former secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the loose organization of former Soviet republics) Boris Berezovsky as Moscow's plenipotentiary representative in the troubled "subject" of the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, Russian troops were engaged in heavy fighting with Islamic militants in the mountainous region of Western Dagestan, also in the North Caucasus. Back in Moscow, Yeltsin's press spokesman denied any Kremlin involvement in the latest scandal to shake the Russian political-economic elite: The Russian government was not involved in laundering any funds, either IMF money or alleged kickbacks for Kremlin refurbishing, and, furthermore, the West was obviously attempting to use the story as yet another political weapon in the ancient struggle to belittle Russia and prevent her from assuming her proper place as a great power.

It was no quieter across the Atlantic. In America, House Banking Committee Chairman Jim Leach (R-IA) called for hearings on the alleged laundering of $200 million of IMF funds through the Bank of New York (BNY) by Russian mobsters and high-ranking Kremlin officials. Vice President Al Gore, who shares responsibility for Russia policy with longtime "friend of Bill" Strobe Talbott, was feeling the heat both from Republicans, already taking a halfhearted stab at stoking a "Who lost Russia?" debate, and from Gore's Democratic challenger, Bill Bradley. Meanwhile, in Europe, Swiss investigators reportedly uncovered evidence of Yeltsin, his daughter and close advisor Tatyana Dyachenko, former privatization czar (and hero to the *Wall Street Journal* crowd in America) Anatol Chubays, and a host of other lesser Kremlin-connected lights participating in what looked like a bribery and kickback scheme involving credit cards, Swiss bank accounts, and a refurbished Kremlin. All of this was apparently facilitated by Kosovo Albanian Mabetex construction company boss Begzhet Paccoli, a man the European and Russian press have tied to the Albanian drug mafia, which uses Kosovo as a conduit for transporting narcotics to Europe. Needless to say, Paccoli's warm relations with longtime Yeltsin crony and Kremlin property manager Pavel Borodin raised some delicate questions about Russia's about-face in Kosovo, first assuming a seemingly uncompromising anti-NATO stance, then gradually caving in, pressuring the Yugoslav regime to accept the occupation of Kosovo by NATO and the Kosovo Liberation Army, which many observers see as an arm of the Albanian drug mafia.

These seemingly unrelated events may well be part of two orchestrated political "*kompromat*" (Russian shorthand for "compromising material") campaigns timed for upcoming presidential elections in both America and Russia. It is a strange tale of two political cultures and two sets of political elites who appear ready to force their respective peoples to bear any burden and pay any price to preserve their own power.

The tale of the venerable Bank of New York's alleged involvement in laundering money for transnational organized crime broke on August 19 in the *New York Times*, followed by related pieces over the next week in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. The papers' unnamed sources in British, American, and Russian intelligence and law enforcement agencies wove a tale that sounds all too convincing to anyone familiar with the state of affairs in today's Russia, as well as the state of moral decay among both American and Russian elites: BNY, interested in garnering a share of Russian business after the Cold War—"emerging market" is the catchphrase—employed Natasha Garfinkel, an immigrant from the Soviet Union, Princeton grad, and BNY executive, to establish contacts with possible clients in the former Soviet Union (FSU). By the time the scandal was exposed in the *Times*, Garfinkel had become Natasha Kagalovsky: She had married a very prominent "young reformer" of the first wave of Russian "democrats," Konstantin Kagalovsky (see John Lloyd's excellent *New York Times Magazine* piece, "Who Lost Russia?" which appeared a scant four days prior to the August 19 "outing" of BNY, another nice piece of timing). Kagalovsky, now deputy chairman of the Yukos oil company, owned by magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, was Russia's official representative to the IMF from 1992-95 and is a longtime friend of Russia's leading "young reformers," Chubays and former acting premier Yegor Gaydar. The BNY's London branch also employed Lucy Edwards, another immigrant and divorcée, now married to a Russian citizen, Peter Berlin, who works for Benex, a U.K.-based company. According to press accounts, British authorities alerted the FBI to Berlin's and Benex's ties to a major figure in FSU organized crime circles, Semyon Yukovich Mogilevich, who apparently used Benex to funnel money out of the FSU for laundering in Western banks, a large portion of it in six BNY accounts reportedly set up by Berlin. Benex itself has had very few business transactions, other than money transfers, and appears to be a front company. The sums involved in the BNY end of the scandal approach ten billion dollars, some of it possibly diverted IMF funds. If BNY was ignorant of the possible illicit nature of the money, it was willfully so.

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Mogilevich, known as "Seva," now lives in Hungary and is a boss in the Solntsevo mafia organization, as any Muscovite could have told the BNY. Seva is a sitting member of an informal commission of FSU mob bosses that was established by the father of FSU organized crime, Vyacheslav Ivankov, known as "Yaponchik" ("the Jap") for his slanted eyes. Yaponchik is now serving a term in a U.S. prison, but his North American-based *Organizatsiya* is running at full steam, maintaining its ties to other FSU crime bosses, many of whom, like Yaponchik and Seva, have gone transnational. Russian press accounts have tied Seva to narcotics and weapons trading, prostitution rings (which often lure young Russian girls to Europe on "modeling" assignments and then enslave them in Seva's brothels), and contract killings.

Mogilevich, Ivankov, and other FSU mobsters established close ties with the politicos and "new Russian" "businessmen" who sprouted up like mushrooms after the rain in Boris Yeltsin's Russia. All of the "seven bankers," the "oligarchs" (including Kagalovsky's boss, Khodorkovsky) who formed an informal commission of their own in 1996 after enriching themselves through insider deals on state-owned enterprises brokered by Chubays, have maintained ties to the mobsters of the FSU *kommisiya*, which brings us back to the BNY scandal. It appears that another BNY affiliate based in Switzerland may be partly owned, according to some Russian press accounts, by "oligarch number one," informal financial advisor to the "family" (Yeltsin's entourage), modern-day Rasputin, and "Russian Moriarty" Boris Abramovich Berezovsky, known as "BAB." And this is where the two scandals—Mabetex and BNY—meet.

Yuri Skuratov is now in limbo, having been suspended by Yeltsin from his post as prosecutor general of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia's parliament (made up of regional governors), sensing an opportunity to gain the upper hand in parliament's efforts to reduce the declining Yeltsin's powers, refused to recognize Skuratov's suspension. The investigations initiated by Skuratov of the "family's" business interests have continued, and Skuratov has been tacitly supported by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, whose premature presidential aspirations have greatly irritated the Kremlin.

Those investigations uncovered the Kremlin refurbishing kickback scheme that tied the "family" to Paccoli and Mabetex. They also uncovered, with the help of aggressive Swiss Prosecutor General Carla Del Ponti (now conveniently being reassigned to the Hague war crimes tribunal), a network of shell companies used by the "family" for laundering siphoned-off government budget funds (and perhaps IMF money), including a Swiss firm owned by BAB called "Andava," originally a conduit for funds embezzled from the Aeroflot airline company, headed by Yeltsin son-in-law Valeri Okulov (he is married to Yeltsin's older daughter, Yelena). The network also includes the BNY affiliate in which BAB reportedly holds an interest.

Yeltsin has been severely criticized in both the West and in Russia for his seemingly mercurial behavior, firing governments with increasing frequency in the midst of an ongoing socioeconomic crisis set off by the August 1998 default and ruble devaluation. It is now apparent to most careful observers, however, that Yeltsin's actions are hardly impulsive. The Kiriyenko government was fired as a scapegoat sacrifice: Someone had to take the fall for the collapse of Russian financial markets in August 1998, a collapse partly brought on—or at least exploited—by the financial speculations of both the oligarchs and their Western partners. Yevgeni Primakov was fired not so much because he was a Brezhnevite retrograde, but because he was determined to use Skuratov's investigations—and his own friendly ties to intelligence and law enforcement agencies (Primakov is a former chief of the SVR, Russia's foreign intelligence service)—to imprison the "seven bankers," an effort that inevitably uncovered the involvement of the "family" in the systematic robbery of the country. Stepashin was replaced not because he was ineffectual (he held the post for a mere three months), but because he refused to manipulate the "power structures"—the security and law-enforcement agencies—in order to shut off Skuratov's investigations and unleash a *kompromat* war on Luzhkov and Primakov, who are now involved in a fragile anti-Kremlin political alliance. (Stepashin apparently was also not interested in the Kremlin's plans to provoke a conflict with the Communists and ban them before December's parliamentary elections.) That is where newly minted Premier Vladimir Putin, a former KGB operative in East Germany, comes in.

Putin is allegedly behind the now famous (in Russia, at any rate) video of a man "similar to Prosecutor General Skuratov" frolicking with a pair of prostitutes, who were obviously set upon the lustful man "similar to Skuratov" by the "special services." When the tape was aired on state-run TV, it merely boosted Skuratov's public-approval ratings. Putin, who ran KGB shell companies which funneled the party's gold out of the collapsing Soviet Union in the late 80's and early 90's, has now been tasked with plugging the leaks in Yeltsin's porous political dike. Most Moscow Kremlin watchers believe that the source of leaks from "Russian law enforcement officials" to American and European newspapers is the cagey old ex-SVR chief Primakov and that Luzhkov is encouraging the leaks as a means of scoring points for the 2000 presidential race. Putin's task is either to destroy Primakov/Luzhkov or to cut a deal and buy Yeltsin some time to wangle himself out of the latest "family" mess. To that end, the Kremlin appears to be pursuing a "carrot-and-stick" approach to the Primakov-Luzhkov problem. On the one hand, stories about front companies that have financed Luzhkov's political operations (and probably laundered Moscow city government money for the mayor) have been planted in the Russian press: Turnabout is fair play, and if the Kremlin cannot uncover anything on the scrupulous ex-SVR chief, then it is easy enough to besmirch the reputation of his unscrupulous political partner. (The stories have also implicated a Luzhkov front company, Sistema, reportedly founded with seed money from Mogilevich's Solntsevo mafia, in the BNY money-laundering operation.) Barring that, the Kremlin is allegedly probing the Primakov-Luzhkov team for a possible deal: The Kremlin will hand over "oligarch number one" in exchange for protection for Yeltsin and a few members of the "family."

BAB, who survived an assassination attempt a few years ago, is not one to go quietly. In the Caucasus, he may be encouraging the confrontation in Karachay-Cherkessiya (his strong-arm men are said to be provoking clashes between the two chief factions in the political struggle), and BAB himself probably suggested to regional elites that he might be of use in mediating the dispute, once again proving to Yeltsin the value of his friendship and the danger of his enmity. Rumor also has it that BAB is financing the Chechen-backed Islamic guerrilla war against the infidel in Dagestan. Once more, BAB could play peacemaker in the region. Alternately, he is not above helping to foment the

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Kremlin's worst nightmare: Islamic revolution inside Russia. The Dagestan militants have long threatened Moscow with a wave of terrorism if the infidel persisted in resisting the encroachments of "pure Islam" on Russian territory. The Moscow explosion may have merely been the first warning from BAB and his Islamic friends.

There is another area where BAB can damage the Kremlin. His media have surprisingly not downplayed the interconnected stories of BNY, Mabatex, Andava, and the "family's" Swiss bank accounts. He will not go down alone, if that is the Kremlin's game. BAB's fondest desire seems to be for Yeltsin to use the Dagestan crisis, the terrorist threat, unrest in Karachay-Cherkessiya, and economic instability as pretexts for the introduction of a state of emergency and the cancellation of upcoming elections. It may be that Putin and Yeltsin had a hand in exacerbating these crises, at least in the beginning. BAB only desires to push them along to assure their mutual protection.

But Russian elites are not the only ones whose hands have been soiled by filthy political games. The Washington establishment knew all about Yeltsin and the Kremlin kleptocracy long before the BNY story appeared. The Kremlin could be conveniently bought off—in the Balkans, over NATO expansion, over the continuing U.S. assault on Russia's old ally, Iraq—with IMF "loans" and World Bank "programs." Besides, many Western big shots, like George Soros, had opportunities opened to them in Russia's "emerging market." The World Bank and IMF globalist bureaucrats had new opportunities for justifying their existence by aiding Russian "restructuring." Thus, Washington overlooked Yeltsin's occasional deviations from Robert's Rules of Order: The shelling of the Russian parliament in 1993 and the unleashing of the unconstitutional Chechen war in 1994-95 (which left nearly 100,000 dead in its wake, according to estimates in the Russian press) were merely the most visible manifestations of Yeltsin's increasingly untrammeled power after the failed August 1991 coup attempt.

Meanwhile, the orchestrated appearance of the BNY story and its Mabatex twin in the American establishment's mouthpieces should arouse suspicions. In Russia, there is a phrase to describe the true nature of the elite class, a class whose only real interest, despite alleged ideological and political differences within it, is the maintenance of its own power: the "party of power." The Washington party of power appears to be unleashing a *kompromat* campaign that implicates Clinton's would-be successor, Al Gore. The establishment clearly means to stop short of discrediting the IMF as an institution (in fact, as of this writing the IMF seems prepared to pass along the next scheduled "tranche" of hundreds of millions of dollars to Russia with nary a peep from establishment media) or globalism as an ideology (interventions across the globe continue with little protest within America). It may be that Gore is deemed to be toting too much Clinton-era baggage, making him an unacceptable candidate in 2000. Policy wonk Bradley or the innocuous George W. may be deemed safer bets. Besides, what better way to deflect Perotista and Buchananite attacks on the New World Order than by conducting a "thorough" investigation of the Kremlingate scandal? Then Bush and Bradley can easily posture as populists and sap the energy of any possible Middle American Revolution. c

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"All the News Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

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During the Indonesian crisis in September, the American media faithfully toed the U.S. government line. "East Timor is not Kosovo!" declared Albright, Berger, and Cohen; "Amen!" responded the Fourth Estate. But commentary on America's hypocritical diplomacy was abundant abroad. In the *Toronto Sun* (September 14), Lorrie Goldstein wrote:

> If East Timor was [sic] Kosovo, we all know what would have happened by now. U.S. President Bill Clinton would have gone on national television to denounce Indonesian president B.J. Habibie as a new Hitler and a threat to world peace. There would have been American-led cries (with a hearty, "Me too!" from Jean Chretien and Lloyd Axworthy) to indict Indonesia's army generals for war crimes. The media would be referring to what is now happening in East Timor as a "new Holocaust." The reason none of this is happening is obvious. The United States, the key player in both conflicts, regards Serbia as a pariah state and Indonesia as a valued trading partner.

The U.S. has given more than moral support to Indonesia; in fact, it has secretly trained Indonesian death squads. According to the *Observer* of London ("How US trained butchers of Timor," by Ed Vulliamy and Antony Barnett):

> Indonesian military forces linked to the carnage in East Timor were trained in the United States under a covert programme sponsored by the Clinton Administration which continued until last year . . . The US programme, codenamed "Iron Balance," was hidden from legislators and the public when Congress curbed the official schooling of Indonesia's army after a massacre in 1991. Principal among the units that continued to be trained was the Kopassus—an elite force with a bloody history—which was more rigorously trained by the US than any other Indonesian unit, according to Pentagon documents . . . Kopassus was built up with American expertise despite US awareness of its role in the genocide of about 200,000 people in the years after the invasion of East Timor in 1975, and in a string of massacres and disappearances since the bloodbath. Amnesty International describes Kopassus as "responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in Indonesia's history."

The Pentagon documents show that the training was in military expertise that could be used internally against civilians, such as urban guerrilla warfare, surveillance, counter-intelligence, sniper marksmanship, and "psychological operations." Specific commanders thus trained have been tied to the current violence and to some of the worst massacres of the past 20 years, including the slaughter at Kraras in 1983 and at Santa Cruz in 1991. The U.S.-trained commanders include the son-in-law of the late dictator General Suharto, Prabowo Subianto.

There is one reason why bombing Indonesia had always been out of the question: It is a Muslim nation—the most populous one, at that—and the regime in Washington is fond of Muslims. But courting Islam, flattering it, and hoping to make it benign may not work. In the United States, it is not p.c. to say so aloud, but such restraint does not apply to William Reese-Mogg of the London *Times*. On September 20, he wrote that East Timor, Chechnya, Kosovo, Iraq, and Kashmir are all parts of a single global problem:

> The danger lies in the reaction between this revival of Islamic confidence, backed by a growing population, and the fears of the neighbouring civilisations. All the neighbouring civilisations feel potentially under threat. The West is concerned about oil, nuclear proliferation, immigration, the survival of Israel and human rights. The threat to Russia is even more direct, from the current wave of terrorism and claims for independence. The Serbs fear a greater Albania. India fears Pakistan and potentially the alienation of the 100 million Muslims in India itself. China is concerned about Central Asia and about the Chinese in Indonesia. The non-Muslim population of sub-Saharan Africa has anxieties as well.

Islam is an unresolved problem, concludes Rees-Mogg, and the West needs to face up to the fact of its revival: "The world is not going to find it easy to bind up the 'bloody borders' of Islam."

That those bloody borders may soon move across the Atlantic does not concern our rulers, not because they are unaware of the threat but because some of them do not expect the United States to be around for much longer. In a laudatory profile in the *New York Times* (September 21)—the second in six months!—Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott declared his belief that the United States may not exist in its current form in the 21st century because nationhood will become obsolete.

But far more remarkable was Talbott's espousal of ideological globalism *before* he joined Clinton's team. In an essay in *Time* magazine ("The Birth of the Global Nation," July 20, 1992) he stated that he was looking forward to government run by "one global authority."

> Here is one optimist's reason for believing unity will prevail . . . within the next hundred years . . . nationhood as

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> we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority. . . . A phrase briefly fashionable in the mid-20th century—"citizen of the world"—will have assumed real meaning by the end of the 21st . . . All *countries* are basically social arrangements, accommodations to changing circumstances. No matter how permanent and even sacred they may seem at any one time, in fact they are all artificial and temporary.

Talbott's ideology demands urgent scrutiny. The destruction of traditional culture and community and its replacement with a nomadic civilization in which man will lose his substantial link with the place where he lives is neither inevitable nor desirable. There is hardly any debate on this life-and-death issue in today's America. In Russia, however, the debate is in full swing. Writing in the monthly magazine *Moskva* (December 1998), Andrei Andreyev defined the issue with perfect clarity:

> The realisation of the "mondialist" project demands that national communities should disintegrate. To the upholders of this project the nation ceases to be the inner substance of the state. And the state, which constitutes the nation's external "integument" and lends it political form and the status of an agent, must be replaced by a structure which emerges under the same name but is indifferent . . . to the nation and easily transformable into an organ for outside management. The state is nothing more than a local structural subdivision of a global system of management, which realises the tasks of this system within the territory entrusted to it. This territory itself is elastic, which is normal in the context of this ideology: an organization may amalgamate, break up, merge, and even disband entirely any of its "divisions" or "departments." The promotion of unifying cultural, political, and economic projects is often defined as Westernization. That is only true to a certain extent, since the peoples of the West are subject to "Westernization" in a specific sense of the word just like the rest, and often in defiance of their inner resistance.

Andreyev is cautiously optimistic that historical tradition will prove more powerful than the "massive informational-technological onslaught" to which traditional communities are subjected. But writing in the same magazine in September 1998, Vladimir Kutyrev warned that the outcome is far from certain:

> Mankind is faced with a new problem as it stands on the threshold of the 21st century, a global problem that is probably a synthesis of all others—*the end of culture*. A true, responsible grasp of the essence and scope of this problem is a prerequisite for human beings in order for them to assess their various activities adequately—whether such activities are instrumental in their survival or, on the contrary, contribute to their extinction.

Kutyrev deems it possible that humans will learn to live "without the clamps of culture, without the feelings of guilt, conscience, without a sense of duty, without an ability for empathy." That can happen if the individual follows the operational rules. Personal well-being and social respect are determined by the degree of conformity with a system whose mechanism is devoid of the requirements of morality or the commandments of religion. The result is death:

> Just like the death of an individual, the death of man as a generic being is not a momentary act, it is a *process* inherent in life itself, one that at a certain stage of development begins to prevail over growth. As history moves along the line "the savage-the barbarian-the personality-the actor-the factor," man reaches a peak of maturity, one can justifiably assume, at the personality stage. This stage lies between the living natural-social world and the world of technology, the social-artificial world. The withering away of personality, its transformation into a "preoccupied automaton," into an actor—that is the *first* functional phase of man's death. . . . The second stage . . . , man's transformation into a factor of a socio-technological system, is more significant than the transformation of personality into an actor. This death is similar to clinical death; it is manifested in the rupture between body and spirit rather than in their disharmony and tension; it is manifested, in fact, in the disintegration of the specific integrity of man. The individual's consciousness captured by technology is divorced, as it were, from the time and place of his body's life. In virtual reality, coordination between information-based and physical being is disrupted along all personality parameters. Man can charge down a high snow-clad mountain or embrace the most beautiful woman on earth in his imagination; functionally he is physically impotent.

The Russian author concludes in the spirit of a seasoned *Chronicles* contributor, which he may yet become:

> The starting point in the struggle of mankind for salvation is the idea of reorientation of its activities from progress to maintaining tradition, to efforts directed against *becoming* and for the sake of *being*. That is the essence of the conservative revolution described in philosophical language. In practical terms, it must be expressed in defending the values of historical man in the teeth of its progressivist reduction to technology and intellect. The survival of Homo sapiens assumes the struggle for the eternal against the temporary.

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Corruption and Contempt

by Samuel Francis

"Out of his surname they have coined an epithet for a knave, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil."
—Thomas Babington Macaulay

Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules Are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago
by Michael A. Ledeen
New York: St. Martin's Press;
202 pp., $22.95

The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the Twenty-First Century
by Dick Morris
Los Angeles: Renaissance Books;
252 pp., $22.95

H. Ward Sterett

For those readers who know very much about Niccolò Machiavelli, the most striking feature of Michael Ledeen's new book, which tries to explicate a number of Machiavelli's precepts with contemporary examples drawn from world politics, business, and sports, is the illustration reproduced on both the book's dust jacket and its frontispiece. The picture is that of a young, bearded man dressed in what appears to be Renaissance costume; since nowhere in the book is there any explanation of who this man is, the reader might suppose it to be Machiavelli himself. But it is not. There are four known representations of the 16th-century political thinker, historian, and statesman—two portraits and two busts—executed during his lifetime or made from death masks, and none shows him with a beard. Nor does the gentleman in the picture resemble Machiavelli without the beard. Who he is and why his picture is included remains a mystery.

In fact, the portrait is suggestive of the superficiality that is the major flaw of both of these books. While Mr. Ledeen is an academic historian and political scientist, his field is contemporary European and Middle Eastern politics, not Renaissance studies or political theory, and his interpretations of Machiavelli are often as awkward and ill informed as one would expect from a specialized mind suddenly confronted with an unfamiliar subject. As for Mr. Morris, the well-known political consultant and foot fetishist, it is impossible to take him or his book seriously, although thankfully he has almost nothing to say about Machiavelli other than to exploit his reputation for craftiness and ruthlessness to serve his own purposes.

Mr. Morris tells us in the first sentence of his first chapter that "The fundamental paradigm that dominates our politics is the shift from representational (Madisonian) to direct (Jeffersonian) democracy," a sentence that misuses the word "paradigm," misrepresents the ideas of both Madison and Jefferson, and is untrue on its face. Two pages later, trying to justify his claim, he tells us that "Referenda, initiatives, and even recalls of elected officials increasingly dominate policy-making." Tell that to the supporters of California's Proposition 187, which ended public benefits for illegal immigrants and was immediately blocked by a federal judge. Or to the Colorado voters who supported Amendment 2, an equally successful ballot measure banning affirmative-action programs for homosexuals at the state level that a federal court also immediately struck down. Aside from the sheer falsity of Mr. Morris's claims for the triumph of "direct democracy," it quickly becomes clear he lacks even the foggiest concept of what "Jeffersonian democracy" means. "Soon," he solemnly intones, "interactive TV-computers will allow national town meetings with direct balloting by tens of millions of people—the very core of the Jeffersonian vision of small-town democracy at work." Mr. Morris evidently thinks that passive mass plebiscites conducted through electronic media are identical to what Jefferson had

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in mind when he discussed the members of small, rural, organic communities deliberating and conducting their own government. Mr. Morris may be a whiz at getting nincompoops and scoundrels elected to high office and making sure they remain popular, but that does not make him a Jefferson or a Madison, let alone a Machiavelli.

Despite its flaws, Mr. Ledeen's book is far more interesting, and in several places it is almost convincing. Though Mr. Ledeen is generally known as a neoconservative (actually, ex-social democrat) journalist writing on foreign affairs, those who recall the Iran-Contra scandal during the latter days of the Reagan administration may remember him as the man who reportedly transmitted the Israeli offer to fund the Nicaraguan Contras in exchange for the supply of arms by the United States to the Khomeini regime in Iran, then at war with Israel's major enemy, Iraq. For some years, Mr. Ledeen has enjoyed a reputation of being closely involved with both the Central Intelligence Agency and the Israeli intelligence services, and he certainly is knowledgeable about global huggermugger of all descriptions. His book might have been more interesting had he applied some of this expertise to illustrating Machiavelli's *realpolitik*; alas, what he offers us instead consists mainly of anecdotes about the late James Goldsmith and Bill Gates, Vince Lombardi and Michael Jordan, Shaka Zulu and Robert E. Lee, and various other figures who pop into his mind. Lessons drawn from the exploits of these figures are then generalized by invoking one or another of Machiavelli's precepts. In some cases, this is amusing, but in others Mr. Ledeen is simply in error in his interpretation of what Machiavelli meant, and he sometimes significantly distorts Machiavelli's meaning.

For example, toward the end of the book, he recounts the story of Cesare Borgia and his lieutenant Remirro de Orca, but he misses the point of the story as Machiavelli told it in chapter VII of *The Prince*. Borgia, having just conquered the Romagna, appointed de Orca to bring order to the area; after a year of draconian rule, de Orca was successful, but he had made himself and Borgia unpopular. Machiavelli writes of Borgia:

> Recognizing that past severities had generated a measure of hatred against him, he then determined to free himself of all popular suspicion by demonstrating that if there had been any acts of cruelty they had proceeded not from him but from his minister instead.

Borgia's recourse was to have de Orca executed by being cut in half and then to display the two halves of the body publicly, thus showing that the culprit who had ruled so brutally had himself been brutally punished.

Mr. Ledeen, however, tells us that "Machiavelli writes enthusiastically about the punishment or execution of corrupt persons, best of all if they are carried out in a spectacular manner so as to drive home the message to the people." De Orca was not "corrupt" at all, however, but merely followed Borgia's orders; Borgia did not execute him for punitive reasons but as a kind of public relations stunt, to win the favor of the citizens by punishing a harsh and oppressive ruler; and Machiavelli does not tell the story because he is "enthusiastic" about physical brutality but to make a point concerning how new territories acquired by conquest should be governed so as to win the support of their residents.

Time and again, Mr. Ledeen uses similar examples drawn from Machiavelli, almost always in ways that exaggerate and even exult in the brutality that Machiavelli believed was occasionally necessary for political order. Mr. Ledeen describes Moses as "Machiavelli's favorite hero," though this is clearly wrong (Cesare Borgia was Machiavelli's favorite hero; Moses is mentioned only a few times in all of Machiavelli's works), and offers an enthusiastic account of how Moses ordered the slaughter of some 3,000 people who had rebelled against him. Moses may not be Machiavelli's favorite hero, but he certainly seems to be Mr. Ledeen's. Ledeen has more references to him in his index than to any other single leader.

What soon becomes fairly clear is that Mr. Ledeen's real concern is not to apply Machiavelli to modern situations but to justify the policies of the state of Israel as well as American globalism—a necessary appendage to Israeli foreign policy—in general. Machiavelli is used mainly as window-dressing for whatever aggressive or deceptive actions Israel considers to be in its interests. Thus, quoting Machiavelli on the necessity of going to war and the disadvantages of postponing it, Mr. Ledeen tells us:

> Since it's going to happen sooner or later, *it's best to fight under the conditions most favorable to you.* In the early eighties, Israel discovered that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons. Instead of postponing conflict with Iraq to a time when Saddam Hussein could attack Israel with atomic bombs, the Israelis struck first and destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in

RECEIVED WISDOM

Chesterton Review, Vol. XXV, Nos. 1 & 2 (February/May 1999).

This double issue of the *Chesterton Review* takes up the subject of fascism and its alleged attractions for British Catholic writers. The best piece is by Chesterton himself, an uncollected essay entitled "The Return of Caesar," in which he firmly rejects not only Nazism and Bolshevism but also the non-alternative of liberalism. The main essay, by Kevin Morris, is notable only for the protests and criticism it evokes from Daniel Callam and Philip Jenkins. Morris has little to say that is new, and in dodging the most obvious questions—what is fascism and why should we oppose it?—he undercuts whatever argument he might be making. One of the last of the believing liberals, Philip Jenkins goes straight to the heart of the matter by taking up specific examples of intellectuals and politicians who first seemed to embrace and then rejected Mussolini:

> If we just take the case of Mussolini, he was immensely popular throughout establishment circles on both sides of the Atlantic through the 1920s and early 1930s, as the last best hope against Communism, and it was in this sense that he was extolled by Winston Churchill. If Churchill was a pro-Fascist, then the term has no meaning whatever. Right up to the Munich crisis and beyond, a remarkably broad segment of respectable political opinion saw Mussolini as a vital counterbalance against Hitler and as the man who might yet save Europe from the evils of war. There was little discredit in praising Mussolini in 1930 or even 1935; it was shameful in 1940.

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1941 was inspired by the same Machiavellian logic.

One would have thought that the results of the latter example might weaken the force of the "Machiavellian logic." The attack on Pearl Harbor involved Japan in a disastrous war with the United States that it could not win. Mr. Ledeen has abstracted a particular insight of Machiavelli and blown it up into an "iron rule" that not only rationalizes aggression and unprovoked slaughter but is ultimately suicidal for the state that follows the rule without considering circumstantial modifications of it.

If Mr. Ledeen's grasp of international politics is bizarre, his understanding of domestic political necessities is even more so. He seizes upon Machiavelli's dictum that, in a corrupt state, a dictatorship is often necessary for the restoration of virtue and political health, and he appears to relish the prospect of such a polity in the United States, which he obviously considers a sink of corruption: "Paradoxically, preserving liberty may require the rule of a single leader—a dictator—willing to use those dreaded extraordinary measures, which few know how, or are willing, to employ." A few pages later, Ledeen writes:

> Nuremberg was just what Machiavelli has in mind when he talks about the use of an almost regal power to save a corrupt republic: relentless prosecution of the old regime, followed by dramatic public executions of the leading criminals, thereby producing catharsis for the people and awe of the avenger who has temporarily come to set things right.

Not only the Nuremberg trials and the postwar U.S. control of Germany but the administration of Douglas MacArthur in postwar Japan are examples of Mr. Ledeen's "restoration of virtue." "MacArthur purged the warlords and imposed a democratic constitution, the success of which is plain for all to see." Of course, the Nazi war criminals were not executed publicly, and there is a vast difference between imposing a particular kind of government on a conquered enemy and imposing one on your own people. Not surprisingly, Abraham Lincoln, a man who "found within himself both moral courage and a willingness to enter into evil—waging one of the bloodiest wars in history to advance freedom in America," is also one of Mr. Ledeen's heroes.

Lest anyone imagine that Mr. Ledeen's glorification of dictatorship as the necessary curative for corruption is merely an academic exercise, a ten-page section of the book on "Clinton's America: Corruption and Contempt" should be consulted. It is not so much President Clinton's uncontrollable libido, questionable financial practices, political opportunism, and possibly murderous inclinations toward adversaries and inexpedient allies that suggest corruption to Mr. Ledeen as it is the President's unwillingness to use military force to destroy Iraq and the Serbs. In the latter case, "as in Iraq, there was a concern verging on obsession with the possibility of American casualties." Earlier, he faults George Bush and Colin Powell for not destroying the Iraqi government entirely during the Gulf War. Predictably, Mr. Ledeen cites an Israeli military expert as offering the proper model of military policy for the United States to follow, and he contrasts starkly the U.S. sexual integration of the Armed Forces with the practice of the Israelis, "whose armed forces some consider the best in the world, not least because of their exceptional morale," and who take great care to segregate the sexes.

Although he does not say it in so many words, Mr. Ledeen clearly regards the United States as a corrupt regime that can no longer govern itself and requires a dictatorship that will, presumably, place certain people on trial, execute them in public, and probably leave the two halves of their corpses rotting in the sun for the edification and amusement of the people. The dictator, at that point unimpeded by "corruption" or any pesky "obsession with the possibility of American casualties," will then proceed to obliterate Iraq and Serbia and any other nation that Israeli foreign policy requires. How or when non-dictatorial government might be restored must be the subject of one of Mr. Ledeen's future books.

Of course, Mr. Ledeen is not far off when he accuses the American Republic of corruption, and not just in regard to Bill Clinton and his military policies. His case for dictatorship might be more compelling, however, if he betrayed any awareness of other respects in which the United States has been corrupted and if he had any concrete suggestions as to how, aside from mass executions, a dictatorship might restore virtue. Personally, I cannot see how dictatorship could do it, and in any case I know of not a single individual living today whom I would trust with the possession of dictatorial power in this country. The problem of corruption in the United States derives not from Mr. Clinton but from the entire political class—the ruling class—that has acquired virtually monolithic social and political power over the last 50 years or so. It is this monolithic structure that encourages corruption, and only when it is replaced with a different structure by another ruling class will the problem of corruption be resolved. Authoritarian leadership might conceivably help, given the right leaders, but by itself it would accomplish nothing and would probably only aggravate the problem. Historically, most dictatorships have been a symptom of civic corruption rather than a corrective of it.

Both Mr. Ledeen and Mr. Morris totally miss the larger point of Machiavelli's political doctrine, which is an elaboration of republican government, centered around the concept of a balance of powers within a ruling class and the society it governs. Mr. Ledeen is correct when he says at one point that Machiavelli influenced the *Federalist*, but that influence consisted of this very principle of the balance of power, manifested formally in the Constitution in the mechanisms of the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances. It is precisely these mechanisms, formally in the structure of the state and informally in the balanced and non-monolithic structure of the elite, that ensure liberty and the rule of law and protect against corruption. The significance of Machiavelli is not that he teaches modern political hounds some clever rationalizations of brutality and mendacity, a few neat political tricks and inside tips on how to win office without deserving it or how to make sure the United States exterminates Israel's enemies, but that he was the first in modern history to revive and reformulate ancient republican doctrine, pass it down to the classical republicans who shaped British and American political thought for the next three centuries, and point the way to a scientific understanding of the nature of elites and their role in any political society. These contributions sail entirely past the heads of Mr. Ledeen and Mr. Morris, but then, writing serious books on serious subjects is a practice virtually unknown to republics that have become corrupt. c

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Wolf's Fang, Fox's Tail

by Wayne Allensworth

"War is war. Guns are not just for decoration."

—V.I. Lenin

Red Victory:
A History of the Russian Civil War
by W. Bruce Lincoln
New York: Da Capo Press;
602 pp., $18.95

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By March 1920, Russia's Whites—an odd and disparate conglomeration of monarchists, anti-Bolshevik socialists, jaded liberals, reactionary clerics, frightened nobles, disinherited landowners, and loyalist army officers and soldiers—had turned what looked like certain victory over the Reds into an ignominious defeat. Disconsolate and grim, the remnants of Denikin's Russian Volunteer Army of the South loaded themselves into ships at the port of Novorossisk, bound for the Crimea, the last fragment of the once-mighty empire that remained a refuge for the Whites. Torn by dissension from within—with monarchists hating the anti-Bolshevik socialists (whom they partly blamed for the chaos that had ensued in Russia after the February 1917 revolution) as much as they hated the Reds who had successfully engineered the "Great October Revolution," and with liberals distrusting both—the Kolchak White dictatorship had collapsed in Siberia and Iudenich's motley army had disintegrated in the north. The Western Allies, disenchanted with the disarray, corruption, and incompetence of the Whites, were abandoning the struggle, gradually withdrawing support to the still-intact Army of the South. As late as 1919, the White armies, never effectively united, much less coordinated, in action, had still posed a serious threat to Soviet power in Russia. What went wrong?

Denikin, a competent tactician who had fallen prey to the Russian diseases of organizational ineptitude and ideological constriction, had handed over command of the remaining White forces to Gen. Baron Petr Wrangel. To Wrangel fell the duty of sustaining White honor (for even he had no illusions about victory in the foreseeable future), and he saw—too late for the anti-Bolshevik cause—what had deprived the Whites of victory even as the great powers of the West irresolutely heeded Winston Churchill's adamant demands that they strangle the infant Bolshevik menace in its Russian crib.

H. Ward Sterett

Wrangel, of Baltic German stock, appeared immune to the romantic illusions of the White reactionaries, who actually believed that a restoration was possible, and to the dreamy republican mysticism of the liberals. He made peace with the socialists and set about patching together a program that would appeal to the masses in the age of *lumpen* democracy. "Aristocratic to the core," Wrangel "had no scruples about the strange bedfellows that politics in a democratic world brought his way." "For Russia and against the Bolsheviks," Wrangel proclaimed that he was prepared to make a pact "even with the devil." Without regard to class or politics, the slim, stern aristocrat began his search for "men of strong character, who know how the masses live and how to shape their lives"—or at least their political sympathies.

He found them in Petr Struve, who had drifted from left to right in a career that had made its focus the study of all things Russian in culture and politics, and Aleksandr Krivoshein, an aging czarist statesman who would follow in the footsteps of Russia's greatest statesman of the late Empire and perhaps of any other period, Petr Stolypin. Wrangel built his White cabinet around these men and formulated a "leftist program with rightist hands" designed to "tear our enemies' principal political weapon from their hands, ignite the imagination of the army and the masses, and make a favorable impression on opinion abroad," as he later explained. Land, according to the new political sales pitch of the Whites (the old "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and *Narodnost*," or "National Roots," trinity had long since turned to dust), would go to those who tilled it in the form of private property. Wrangel offered his Stolypinesque version of land reform as an alternative to the Bolshevik slogan of "Peace, Land, and Bread!" that had inclined the restive and land-hungry masses of a peasant country to turn a blind eye to the suppression of the pro-land reform, elected Constituent Assembly in 1918. These tended subsequently—and understandably, in view of their fear of a restorationist land repartition in the event of a White victory—to support the Reds over the Whites in the civil war that followed.

Wrangel had promised the rule of law over the terror of the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka, or the pogroms and looting of the undisciplined armies of his predecessors. He enforced strict discipline in his revived Army of the South, rooted out incompetence, and punished corruption. Wrangel enforced unity within his White leadership and readily recruited Red Army veterans who had grown disil-

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Wayne Allensworth is the author of The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-Communist Russia *(Rowman & Littlefield).*

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lusioned with Bolshevik dictatorship. He did all these things and even briefly mounted a renewed assault on Soviet Russia, trying to convince his Western contacts that he was worthy of support and hoping to convert the sea of Russian peasants to White republicanism with an attractive array of slogans. He did all these things, and failed. Within a year of the evacuation to the Crimea, the White cause would be irretrievably lost, and Wrangel and a host of others would spend the rest of their lives attempting to explain, if not justify, the ineptness of a White leadership that had failed to recognize the political imperatives of the modern age.

The ideological cohesion, strict discipline, and strong leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and company had enabled the Bolsheviks to read the epochal tea leaves correctly and organize a modern political campaign that mobilized the narrow self-interest, envy, and resentment, as well as the highest aspirations, of the atomized masses to the service of the all-knowing, all-seeing state. Mussolini, Hitler, Mao, and FDR would follow suit, as would Madison Avenue and Hollywood. The People had made their real, and final, choice.

This aspect of a previously recognized insight—leaving out FDR, if not Hollywood, from the totalitarian rogue's gallery—is most likely the Big Point that professors of history, quite correctly, will urge their students to take from *Red Victory*. Nevertheless, judging from the text itself, if there is a single Big Point that W. Bruce Lincoln hoped his readers would glean from this book—the final volume in a trilogy that began with *In War's Dark Shadow: The Russians Before the Great War* and continued with *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution*—this reviewer has failed to see it. Beyond a mainstream worldview that sometimes seems to let the "progressive" Bolsheviks off the hook a bit too easily and at other times may be slightly too unsympathetic to the Whites, Lincoln has no "framework" (as academics put it) for analyzing the mass of information he sets out in *Red Victory*, no readily identifiable theory of history, politics, or economics that would facilitate an intellectually rigorous examination of the causes, effects, or course of the Russian Civil War. In short, his book makes no attempt to telegraph to the reader what the Big Point is, which means there is no effort to veil liberal snobbishness in theoretical pretentiousness. That is not Dr. Lincoln's forte, and he is honest enough to forego such empty posturing.

What Lincoln has given us is a highly readable and readily accessible history in narrative form that assumes his readers can think for themselves. His book allows the record, Red and White, to speak for itself, unsanitized in the interest of any discernible political agenda or on behalf of any particular academic theory. Epic in scope, *Red Victory* nevertheless is human in scale: Like a skilled novelist, Lincoln arrays a Tolstoyan cast of characters, each with a "fascinating tale" to tell, as the author writes in his preface, each one managing to illuminate the often confused events, themselves lost in a fog of war and social upheaval. Bruce Lincoln's success in presenting this tale of sweep and high drama, of human pathos, tragedy, and low comedy in a coherent fashion that manages to cram in necessary information even as it sustains a compelling narrative force is a truly remarkable achievement.

More than anything else, *Red Victory* is a fine example of history as dramatic chronicle, displaying Man in all his glory as fallen angel and also Man as the agent of evil, as killer angel. At times, the book reads like a Russified version of a novel by Cormac McCarthy, evoking a Gnostic sense of the evil world: As the Reds tighten their grip and terrorize the peasantry, reluctant to give up grain to Cheka expropriators, the heretofore sympathetic inhabitants of the village succumb to the savagery that has become commonplace in their land, now a hellish tapestry of demonic violence.

> Tambov [peasant] partisans nailed known and suspected Bolsheviks to trees, often by driving a single railroad spike through the victim's left arm and foot and leaving him to dangle in agony a few feet above the ground . . . [the peasant partisans] maimed and mutilated their victims, flaying some, quartering others, and disemboweling still others . . . they often buried captured enemies alive, but took care to leave their victims' heads above ground so that peasant women could urinate on them before the village dogs closed in to gnaw the still living flesh from their faces and skulls.

The Cheka, of course, had already made its reputation by skinning prisoners alive, gouging out their eyes, crucifying them, and by developing a system of concentration camps that would eventually metastasize, assuming the form of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago. The descent into savagery had made death the only currency, with many buying freedom by their own hand: Moscow sociologist Pitirim Sorokin recorded a series of gruesome suicides by poison, hanging, and every other conceivable means during the dreadful winter of 1919-20. The Russian "Civil War" was more than war: It was an orgy of rape, pillage, and murder, foreshadowing what was to come. "There is no point in cursing anyone," wrote conservative historian Yuriy Gote in his Moscow diary in 1921, the year of the Reds' final consolidation of power. "A people that has ruined itself has no right to demand anyone's help or sympathy." Thus did a sincere Russian patriot grimly judge his own country.

The same Yuriy Gote—and a few of his neighbors—had earlier displayed behavior that one might interpret as a sign of hope for redemption even in the depths of hell's inner circle. Gote's wife died during the same Moscow winter when Sorokin kept his grim accounting of death's icy harvest. The neighbors fashioned a coffin out of "the rough remains of a garden fence," sacrificing precious fuel so that his wife could have a Christian burial. Gote put the crude receptacle for his wife's earthly remains on a horse-drawn sledge and drove it some 30 miles to a graveyard at Moscow's Virgins' Convent. Lincoln records that he carried his grim cargo to Moscow at night so as to avoid trouble: The Bolshevik bureaucrats had restricted the use of wood for such personal uses. Gote told his diary,

> The moon was shining and the whole sky was sown with stars. Her last ride was in this magical setting. . . . The Revolution has devoured everything that was most dear to me . . . . There is nothing ahead but terrible loneliness and fear of hunger.

Russia had succumbed to the Bolsheviks' skillful use of the "wolf's fang" (the Red terror) and the "fox's tail" (effective propaganda). The reader may judge for himself the lessons to be learned from the story Dr. Lincoln tells. c

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Love and Grace

by Thomas Fleming

Una vita in fabbrica: itinerario spirituale
by Mario Marcolla
Milano: Maurizio Minchella Editore; 101 pp., Lire 18,000

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This is a remarkable book by a remarkable man. Mr. Marcolla is well known to many conservatives in Europe and the United States for his observations on modern philosophy contributed over the years to *Osservatore Romano*. He is a keen student of Anglo-American conservative thought as well as having been a friend and translator of the late Russell Kirk. Dr. Kirk and the editor of this magazine are only two of many Americans whom Marcolla has served as *cicerone* in their explorations of Italian political and intellectual life.

Despite frequent bouts of ill health, Mr. Marcolla exudes an air of benign understanding, though not complacency. What this little book reveals, however, is the long and hard road that has been traveled on this spiritual itinerary. Born into a family reduced to poverty, Marcolla watched his father trying to preserve his dignity working in the factories of Torino. The young Mario was sent to work in a bakery. As he grew older, he drew up plans for his self-education, only to see them founder for lack of time and energy. He found time to study Italian literature, and learned German and English eventually.

After studying some accounting, Marcolla went into the textile industry and by the time of his retirement had worked his way up to plant manager. His real life, however, was intellectual and spiritual. As a working man, he took an eager interest in Marx and the Russian Revolution, eventually finding in it a "Luciferian rebellion" of matter against form. Working among the looms and shuttles, he contemplated the great problems of existence and came to regard the factory as "a place of pain and sorrow, a nursery of men and women devoid of deep relations, without spiritual roots."

Factory work, he realized, was inherently dehumanizing:

> The influx of machines modeled on scientific reasoning appeared . . . to be diabolical: assembly-line work mortified the personalities, creating psychological dissociations which were noticeable in the old workers, in their worn-out look, in a kind of inattention which was the sign of an unconscious crisis, of the impossibility of being whole men like the old-time artisans and peasants from which they were descended.

Much of this memoir is devoted to Marcolla's progress through books, from leftists to Nietzsche and Evola and finally to the wisdom of the great Italian philosopher Augusto del Noce. The higher truth is to be sought, he concludes, in the human work that "binds each and every person to a supernatural destiny of love and grace." This is not the mysticism that flees the everyday world of hope and fear, but an appreciation of the mysteries woven on the loom of life. "Every man has his talents and spends them not by himself but, in his liberty and autonomy, in harmony with a providential plan that hangs over him and protects him."

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles.

Our Time

by Bill Croke

Mountain Time
by Ivan Doig
New York: Scribner; 316 pp., $25.00

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In a regional literary world ripe with poseurs, Ivan Doig may be the true descendant of Wallace Stegner. Unlike the typical carpetbagger who begins with preconceived notions as to the nature of the "real" West, Doig actually grew up here during an unforgiving time when the place was good for nothing except for what could be physically extracted from it. The two authors have led somewhat parallel lives, their work growing out of their Western roots, each accepting a necessary flight from beloved surroundings to an academic life lived in cities west of the West.

In Doig's new novel, *Mountain Time*, Mitch Rozier—at 50—is at loose ends. His career as an environmental journalist in politically correct Seattle ("Cyberia") is in a nosedive because of the financial restructuring of his paper, *Cascopia*. His ex-wife hates him, and his two now-grown children ignore him as he did them while they were growing up; his aged father is tormenting Mitch long distance with tangled business affairs that directly affect him. Mitch's girlfriend, a caterer and native Montanan like himself, is the glue that holds his life together.

Mr. Doig—author of the National Book Award nominee *This House of Sky*—is on familiar ground. In novels such as *English Creek*, *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana*, and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, he has created a Montana Yoknapatawpha, complete with multigenerational interrelated families and mutually remembered local history. A native, Doig knows the terrain of working-class Montana: the ranchers, farmers, and small-town businessmen who struggle to adapt to life in a changing West.

Mitch returns to Twin Sulphur Springs, "a country of great mountains and mediocre human chances," ostensibly to deal with his father's financial difficulties. There, Lyle Rozier nonchalantly tells him of the leukemia that is slowly killing him: "The doc says it's about got me. Why I called you." Lyle—a World War II veteran of the South Pacific—is a member of that great generation of Americans who expected nothing from life except the fruits of hard work, pain, and ultimately death, a generation—unlike their progeny—for whom whining and complaining were anathema. While sticking around to care for his ailing father (and forced to tolerate the annoying Donald Brainerd, a new New West high-tech neighbor constantly complaining that Lyle's yardful of rusting farm machinery and "tractor carcasses" is spoiling his bay-window view of the Rockies), Mitch is reminded—through flashbacks to his childhood growing up in "the Springs"—what kind of man Lyle really is: a taciturn survivor of a life typically fraught with contradictions and emotional turmoil, including the guilt left over

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from his estranged wife's death in a car wreck years before.

Complicating all this are the McCaskill sisters, Mariah and Lexa. Mariah, the elder, is a successful globe-trotting photojournalist. She is middle-aged, divorced, but still retains a wild, red-haired beauty that can "cloud men's minds." Mariah talks the reluctant Mitch into permitting her to photograph the willing Lyle's last days for a newspaper photo series. Lexa McCaskill, Mitch's live-in companion, patiently awaits the passing of his mid-life difficulties so that they can get on with their lives.

The central theme of *Mountain Time* is the baby boomer generation's reaction to two inescapable facts: the passing of their parents, the realistic and hardworking World War II generation, and their relations with their own children, the alienated products of divorce, mindlessly groping their way through a seemingly nihilistic turn-of-the-millennium high-tech consumer society. Mitch spends a lot of time contemplating his dying father and his own out-of-reach kids, for which the idealism he acquired during his coming-of-age in the 1960's doesn't seem to be of much help.

Sigmund Freud wrote that the most poignant day in a man's life is the day of the death of his father. When Lyle finally passes on in his sleep, Mitch sees the event as anticlimactic and is merely numbed. He, Lexa, and Mariah set out on a backpacking trip into the stunning Rocky Mountain Front backcountry of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, with the idea of honoring Lyle's wish to have his ashes scattered—and the ritual photographed by the journalistic voyeur Mariah—atop the (fictional) Phantom Woman Peak. In 1939, the 18-year-old Lyle had helped build the Phantom Woman fire tower while employed by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, in the course of which he met—unbeknownst to him—the renowned conservationist Bob Marshall (about whose legendary tramps in the Northern Rockies Mitch is researching a piece). On that summer day in 1939, Bob Marshall almost broke a leg on an unnailed step on the tower; in 1996, Mitch Rozier does so after a row with Lexa and the professionally minded Mariah over changing his mind about the ash-scattering ceremony, because "My father never cared a whoop about any of this [the Bob Marshall Wilderness] . . . He wanted it carved up into money. Just never quite managed to figure out how." Mitch's broken leg forces Lexa to hike out for help, leaving Mitch and Mariah to a contrived love affair in the fire tower cabin: a forced and predictable device designed to make for a happy ending when Mitch and Lexa reunite in Seattle at the novel's conclusion. Ivan Doig should know better.

He does know his Rocky Mountains, and he paints his landscapes well. He knows his ranchers and Hutterites too, and has a sharp ear for the nuances of colloquial Montana speech. But as the critic-poet Randall Jarrell once observed, "A novel is a long narrative with something wrong with it." *Mountain Time* is at once a beautiful and a flawed thing.

Bill Croke writes from Cody, Wyoming.

Damn Lies—or Statistics

by David B. Kopel

More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws
by John R. Lott, Jr.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 225 pp., $23.00

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The most important book ever published about firearms policy is John Lott's superb *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*. No other firearms book has reshaped the political debate so profoundly or its author been subjected to such a determined campaign of lies and libels. The intensity of the campaign against Lott is a powerful confirmation of his book's importance and one reason why it should be read by everyone who cares about firearms policy, which is literally a matter of life or death: Lobbyists who are trying to prevent the public from discovering John Lott's research are indirectly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of innocent people every year.

Throughout the 19th century, "the right to keep and bear arms" meant exactly what it said: The right to carry a gun was protected just as firmly as the right to own a gun. Some states, particularly in the South, enforced laws against carrying handguns concealed, but the right to open carry was almost universally respected. By the 1970's, however, the right to carry had been restricted in most jurisdictions. America was well on the way to treating guns like cigarettes: permissible in private but completely banned from public spaces.

In 1988, however, Florida—thanks to the energetic support of the Florida Chiefs of Police Association and Unified Sportsmen of Florida—initiated a national trend by enacting a "shall issue" handgun permit law, allowing any adult who has a clean record and has taken safety training to obtain a permit to carry a concealed handgun for protection. Now, 29 states have a law similar to Florida's, while Vermont and Idaho (outside of Boise) require no permit.

Before John Lott came along, a few researchers (myself included) had studied the effects of these laws. Clayton Cramer and I (in the *Tennessee Law Review*) had analyzed changes in murder rates in "shall issue" states compared to national trends and found tentative evidence that murder rates fell after enactment of "shall issue" laws. David McDowall (in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*) had analyzed murder rates in five counties and reported that they rose. These efforts, nevertheless, proved far inferior to Lott's.

John Lott has blown all the previous research away: His work amounts to the most thorough criminological study ever performed. Lott collected data from every one of the 3,054 counties in the United States over an 18-year period and, in contrast to the Kopel and McDowall homicide-only studies, examined changes in the rates of nine different types of crime. He also accounted for the effects of dozens of other variables, including variations in arrest rates, in the age and racial composition of a county's population, in national crime rates, and in changes made to gun-control laws, including the adoption of waiting periods. Lott's findings show that concealed carry laws significantly reduce violent crime. On average, the murder rate falls by ten percent, that of rape by three percent, and aggravated assault by six percent.

While crime begins to fall off immediately, the benefits of concealed handgun laws take about three years to make themselves fully felt. This is not surprising: In most states, a flood of applications occurs in the first few weeks the law is on the

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books, followed by a gradual rise in the percentage of the population which has acquired permits. The larger the percentage of the population with permits, the greater the drop in crime. (That percentage typically ranges from one to five percent.) Interestingly, Lott also found a small but statistically significant increase in nonconfrontational property crimes such as larceny. Apparently, while concealed handgun laws do not reduce the appetite criminals have for other people's property, they do encourage the more rational subset to acquire it in ways that do not put their own lives at risk. And everyone, not just gun carriers, benefits from the reduced crime rate, since aggressors cannot know which potential victims might have a concealed weapon. (The only remaining safe zones for criminals are schools, thanks to laws in many states which forbid gun-carrying on school property, even by licensed adults.)

Despite the book's high level of statistical sophistication, *More Guns, Less Crime* makes for enjoyable reading. Lott lays out the data in an accessible manner, building from simpler statistical models to more complex ones. Indeed, the book is a good antidote to the "innumeracy" which infects even the best-educated Americans. Statistics are comprehensible if you pay attention, and *More Guns, Less Crime* is an excellent way to overcome numerophobia.

The most interesting part of the book is the chapter in which Lott addresses his critics. In marked contrast to the anti-gun number crunchers funded by the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Lott has made his data readily available to any and all researchers, even supplying them with a computer disk so they needn't key it in again. Even so, certain critics have chosen to offer superficial talking points rather than reanalyze the data.

Lott's most sophisticated critic is Prof. Daniel Nagin, who engages in a form of research called "data torturing." Turning data every which way but loose, Nagin demonstrated (and Lott conceded) that concealed handgun laws require several years to have their full effect. Nagin's other criticisms, however, such as the often-repeated assertion that all the benefits of concealed carrying vanish if one removes Florida from the equation, turn out to be meaningless. The Florida factoid has partial validity—but only if one throws out the data from all U.S. counties with a population of less than 100,000. Under such conditions, concealed-carry laws do not appear to affect the incidence of murder or rape. Yet even if one looks only at counties outside of Florida with a population of over 100,000, the data still show a large decrease in aggravated assault and robbery rates.

While academic critics of Lott's research have stuck to statistical analysis, the anti-gun lobbies have unleashed a furious and thoroughly dishonest public relations campaign against Lott himself, with the most scurrilous attacks coming from the Violence Policy Center (an organization which chides Handgun Control, Inc., for its timidity). The VPC claims that Lott's study was "in essence, funded by the firearms industry." In truth, Lott's study wasn't paid for by anybody: While at work on the book, he drew his regular salary as a University of Chicago law professor. (Lott is presently a member of the Yale Law School faculty.) The University of Chicago, like many other high-ranking universities, was given an endowed chair by the Olin Foundation. The Olin Foundation plays no role in selecting the holder of a chair or in determining his field of research. Some of the Olin Foundation's money came from the late John M. Olin, who acquired part of his fortune in the firearms and ammunition business. To claim that everything any Olin professor does is "paid for by the gun industry" is like claiming that everyone who gets a grant from the Ford Foundation is subsidized by the automobile industry. The anti-Lott campaign continues to bear fruit in the form of opinion columns written by propagandists who are too lazy to read Lott's book and rely instead on bullet-points from groups like the VPC. For example, Molly Ivins claimed that Lott "himself admits, he didn't look at any other causative factors—no other variables, as they say." Of course, anyone who bothered to crack the book would see that Lott accounted for dozens of other causal factors. These distortions show just how weak the case against concealed carry really is.

The vicious campaign against Lott reveals the fundamental extremism of the anti-gun movement. Concealed handgun laws are precisely the type of moderate, "reasonable" laws which the anti-gun groups claim to support. Except in Vermont and rural Idaho, a person must go through a licensing process and background check in order to get a permit, and many states require applicants to take safety training as well (though Lott found that the safety training requirement had no statistically discernible effect on crime rates or gun accident rates). So why the intense opposition to laws which encourage controlled gun use? The answer is that the anti-gun movement's greatest concern is not that Lott might be making up his data, but that the data might be correct. In their minds, armed self-defense by private citizens is immoral. As Sarah Brady of Handgun Control, Inc., put it, "To me, the only reason for guns in civilian hands is for sporting purposes." Her husband, Jim Brady, identified the circumstances in which he believes people should be allowed to possess handguns: "[F]or target shooting, that's okay. Get a license and go to the range. For defense of the home, that's why we have police departments." Mrs. Brady's long-term goal, she told the *New York Times*, is a "needs-based licensing" system. Under the Brady system, all guns would be registered. The local police chief would decide if a person who wanted to buy a gun had a legitimate "need." Mrs. Brady listed hunters and security guards as persons having a legitimate need, but not regular people who wanted guns for self-protection.

Much of the anti-gun lobby's agenda involves trying to restrict self-defense by marketing gun restrictions as "reasonable." For example, there is currently a push to require gun owners to lock up their guns, in the name of preventing access by juvenile criminals. But if a gun has to be locked up all the time, then it is much less readily available in an emergency, such as a home invasion. And concealed handgun laws (which cost the government nothing, the licensing system being paid for by user fees) are a far more cost-effective way to reduce crime than prison construction, hiring more police, subsidizing midnight basketball, or anything else that government does.

The longer the gun-prohibition lobby and its political allies delay "shall issue" legislation in the 19 states which do not have such a law, the more people will be murdered, assaulted, robbed, and raped. And the more people who read *More Guns, Less Crime*, the sooner streets in every state will become safe zones for good citizens, rather than for predators.

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Letter From York

by R.C. Sproul, Jr.

The League Against the South

York, Alabama, is a sad little Southern town. Though it is small, it lacks the typical charm of the South. Not much happens there, but what does happen happens in the typically Southern way. The wheels of justice grind not with something as tacky as money, but with the more genteel means of connections: It's not how much you have, but whom you know. But a man of the cloth has entered the fiefdom of York, and entered with all the bluster and tact of Martin Luther. His name is Martin Murphy, so far still the pastor of tiny little York Presbyterian Church. York Presbyterian is not a part of that old yet hip monolith that is the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., they of the yearly debates on the merits of repealing the Seventh Commandment. York is a part of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, a denomination much like the town of York. It is old, Southern, lacking in any particular distinctiveness, and tends to be run by those with the greatest pedigree.

Martin, with his faithful preaching of the Gospel and with the fruit thereof (outsiders actually came in and joined the church), has upset the balance of power. Like the other Martin, he proved unintimidated by the existing powers. Two church elders (elders in Presbyterian churches are like the board of directors) demanded his resignation. Martin refused, as the majority of the elders and of the church (by a two-to-one margin) asked him to stay.

Presbyterians are an orderly bunch. We have rules and procedures, a Form of Government that tells us how we deal with disputes. And we have courts of appeal. The Tennessee and Alabama presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is just such a court. It is composed of pastors and elders of the churches in that region. The complainant made a motion to that court that Mr. Murphy be removed from his pulpit. The court said no, and the complainant announced his refusal to be reconciled with the pastor. (*Being reconciled* is church-ese for making up and trying to get along.) Charges were brought against the complainant for his failure to be reconciled, and the court adjourned. Church courts, of course, do not issue fines, nor require incarceration or community service. Instead, those found guilty are judged to be outside Christ's kingdom. They are stripped of their church membership and not permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Any good lawyer (pardon the oxymoron) knows that when you can't get what you want in one court, you go to another. And so the complainant did. He went to a local judge in the state court system and asked both that the elders of York Presbyterian Church be temporarily restrained from exercising church discipline and that the presbytery be required to remove Pastor Murphy from the pulpit. The papers filed were filled with information on the pastor's involvement in the League of the South, including the great crime of having Michael Hill, the president of the League, as a member of the church. (Though the League is probably a part of the complaint, no one has been able to discover anything in our Form of Government, nor in the Bible, which would forbid such involvement.) The judge granted the first request; he has not yet decided on the second.

We have a jurisdiction problem. The state court, like us Presbyterians, is supposed to be orderly. They have a form of government they answer to, the state constitution and, by loose and liberal understandings of the 14th Amendment, the federal Constitution. Both formally recognize that the state is not to interfere with the church's business. If state courts overrule church courts, then the state courts have become the church courts. We have an established religion, with lawyers and judges serving as priests. The judge's action is akin to the supreme court of Singapore telling my local justice of the peace how my property-line dispute with my neighbor should be decided. (Or perhaps like the president of these United States telling a foreign government how to manage its civil war.)

The judge's jurisdictional error, however, is not as bad as that of the complainant. The ultimate authority for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is the Holy Scriptures. And therein the Apostle Paul says, to litigious members of the church at Corinth:

> If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life? Therefore if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! [I Corinthians 6: 1-6].

For a man that is often accused by his critics of being obtuse, Paul is pretty clear here. And so when court reconvened—that is, the court of the Tennessee and Alabama presbytery—did they convict the complainant for his aggravated jurisdiction hopping? No, they dropped all charges against him. When Caesar said "Heel," the dogs obeyed. Like the state courts confronted with the federal bullies, the church courts have obediently handed over their lunch money without so much as a whimper.

None of us are fans of judicial activism. All of us are aware that too many courts are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the limitations on their authority. Whether they are telling the local schools in Rockford, Illinois, how to conduct their affairs, or telling states whether or not they can protect unborn children from doctors of death, courts overstep their jurisdiction every day. This time, however, they have crossed an even more dangerous line. It is one thing to intrude on the authority of some other judge; it is another thing altogether not only to ignore the First Amendment, but to invade the clear jurisdiction of nature and nature's God in so doing. His law says this of the Chief Justice of the truly Supreme Court:

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Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then He rebukes them in their anger and terrifies them in His wrath saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, My holy hill." I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession. You shall rule them with an iron scepter; You shall dash them to pieces like pottery." [Psalm 2: 1-9]

Everything seems quiet in York today. Neither the ACLU nor its Christian counterpart, Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice, has descended upon this judge to set him right. Nor are there busloads of Yankee freedom riders marching in defense of Martin Murphy. There are no U.S. marshals escorting him to his pulpit. It seems as though the First Amendment will go not with a bang, but a whimper. But Martin keeps fighting—not for the First Amendment, but for the complainant's soul. Church discipline exists first for the protection of the charged, that they might be brought to repentance. And for that crime Mr. Murphy may soon find himself in jail.

If so, he will be comforted in this. First, he will not be the first nor the last servant of the King to serve time under pretenders to His throne. And his sentence will of necessity be a short one. For the Gospel that he so faithfully preaches is the same Gospel that sets men free. Second, Martin believes that there will come a day when men will not be judged by the content of their rolodex, but by the content of their character. When that day comes, both the judge and the complainant, unless they repent, will be nothing but broken pottery.

Like Bethlehem before it, York is not the center of the universe. But such is the kind of place to which God brings His visitation. And when He comes He always comes both with judgment and with peace. Those who confess that His Son is indeed Lord, enthroned on high, get the peace. Those who arrogate honor and authority for themselves just become pieces. And Martin will cry out, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty, I'm free at last."

R.C. Sproul, Jr. is the editor of Tabletalk *magazine and pastor of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church.*

Letter From Montreal

by John O'Neill

Oui Shall Overcome!

◆

Quebec shows its patriotism every year on June 24, one week before Canada Day—not because the French-speaking province gets a head start on the rest of the country, but because June 24 is the feast day of Jean Baptiste, the patron saint of Quebec.

By no means has the holiday become void of religious significance. (See my article "Canada: The Catholic Factor" in the November 1998 issue of *Catholic World Report*.) But it is now more synonymous with Quebec nationalism than with the saint himself. Thus, the holiday is often referred to as *La Fête Nationale*.

While the other nine provinces celebrate Canada Day on July 1, the anniversary of the country's attainment of the status of a dominion within the British Empire in 1867, even many in Quebec who favor remaining part of Canada take more pride in St. Jean Baptiste Day.

In characteristic denial, the Canadian media reported that politics played no part in this year's celebration. "More Fun, Less Politicking," read the June 25 headline of the *Montreal Gazette*, Quebec's only English-language daily. It was reminiscent of the Toronto *Globe & Mail* headline on July 22, 1994: "Separatism not an issue, poll finds." Two months later, the separatists were victorious in the provincial elections, and the next year, Canada dodged a bullet when a bare 50.6 percent majority in Quebec defeated the last sovereignty referendum.

Given the history of St. Jean Baptiste Day, the gloating by the media was understandable. The parade in Montreal was held on the eve of the feast day. The last time Montreal had held its parade at night was in 1968, when militant separatists hurled bottles at Pierre Trudeau, the charismatic French Canadian who had just become prime minister of Canada. Thanks largely to the political mileage Trudeau got out of this incident, he would remain prime minister for most of the following 16 years.

After 1968, Montreal canceled its parade but revived it in 1990. As political fate would have it, the parade that year came two days after the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, which would have extended to Quebec the status of a distinct society.

Taking the collapse of Meech Lake as an affront to Quebec, separatists took to the streets in droves for the parade that year. Support for sovereignty became so strong that a referendum would have been held had Liberal Premier Robert Bourassa been a separatist (not that Bourassa was insensitive to Quebec nationalism).

And while, in recent years, there has been no incident comparable to 1968 in Montreal's parade, violence and mass arrests were the norm until this year. The rioting in Quebec City was especially bad in 1996. And Montreal had a particularly tense parade in 1998, when English-rights activist William Johnson was hit with a pie in the face.

Johnson boycotted this year's parade. And the politicians who watched the parade from the platform, as Trudeau did in 1968, were separatist Premier Lucien Bouchard (head of the Parti Québecois) and provincial Liberal opposition leader Jean Charest (a federalist who advocates conciliation with separatists). So there was no one for the separatists to attack.

But no politics? More accurate, and interesting, is that there was no red-and-white Canadian flag with the maple leaf. While it is bigger news that non-separatist contingents participated in this year's parade, the lack of a single Canadian flag is newsworthy (and quite political), especially since one of the non-separatist contingents was the Black Watch Royal Highlanders, the oldest pipe band in North America and an official army reserve unit in the Canadian military.

A Black Watch spokesman explained to the Canadian papers that the parade is "about music, not politics." But when a military reserve unit agrees to march without its country's flag, especially in a parade awash with the Quebec flag, it is

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very much about politics.

The failure of the Canadian media to publicize the absent maple leaf was no surprise. From false assurances that the separatists lack political support to specious arguments that Quebec has no legal grounds to separate from Canada even if a referendum were approved, the media and political elite of Canada are models of denial.

The legality of secession was supposed to have been settled last year by the Canadian Supreme Court. The Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (himself a Quebecer) sued to enjoin Quebec from secession, citing the Constitution of 1982 (which has no position on secession and which Quebec never ratified anyway). The court declared Quebec's right to secede and the rest of Canada's obligation to negotiate a separation if a *clear majority* in Quebec approves a referendum.

Unfortunately, it is not clear what "clear majority" means. Thus both sides have claimed legal victory. Countering the old separatist claim that a majority need only be 50 percent plus one, federalists insist an overwhelming majority is needed. In one sense, they are right: Separating from Canada cannot be as simple as 50 percent plus one. But this is not an adequate majority to ensure Quebec's future in Canada, either.

Yet it is this very type of majority—the result of the last referendum in 1995—on which federalists now rely. This double standard plagues federalist reporters and politicians. For instance, they do not like being reminded that Newfoundland voted by a bare majority to become a Canadian province in 1949. Whereas Quebec's nationalist motto is *Je me souviens* ("I remember"), the Canadian media's motto could well be *J'oubliés* ("I forget").

Consider the case of English-rights activist Howard Galganov, who was criticized by separatist politicians in 1997 for being a member of the violent Jewish Defense League in the 1970's. The *Globe & Mail* blasted the separatists for digging too far into Galganov's past. But in an Orwellian twist, the same editorial also blasted the separatists for allegedly rekindling the antisemitism of Quebec nationalists of the 1930's.

Of course, antisemitism is an embarrassing chapter not only in Quebec history but in Canadian history. Yet there is a bizarre double standard concerning whose past is fair game. Consider separatist and former Quebec jurist Richard Therrien, who came under fire in 1997 on a strained theory that he had lied prior to his judicial appointment about his past association with the militant Front for the Liberation of Quebec (FLQ).

Naturally, the Canadian press called for Therrien's political head. Not so in the case of Yvon Charbonneau, a former separatist and labor activist with ties to militant groups in the 70's. When this former separatist ran as a federalist for the Quebec legislature in 1994, his story was treated as a charming political odyssey. And the press was even more supportive of Jean Louis Roux when he was appointed lieutenant governor of Quebec by Chrétien in 1996, even though his past includes marching in a pro-Nazi parade during World War II.

Apparently, past militant separatism and/or antisemitism is fine if the politician is now a federalist and deplorable if the politician is a separatist. A similar double standard was applied in 1995 to French President Jacques Chirac and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Chirac had indicated that France would recognize a sovereign Quebec were the referendum to pass. Though Chirac subsequently apologized for the statement, newspapers like the *Toronto Star* were quick to blast him for interfering in Canadian affairs. But Thatcher, who had criticized the separatists with harsh and personal language during a visit to Canada that year, received no such rebukes.

The United States was careful to stay mostly out of the fray in 1995. President Clinton even pledged neutrality during a state visit to Canada in February of that year. But this did not prevent federalist reporters and politicians from declaring that the United States would exclude a sovereign Quebec from any current agreements or arrangements that the United States has with Canada.

Such hijacking of American policy should have infuriated Americans. But even more infuriating was Chrétien's plea to Clinton in October 1995 to oppose the separatists, who were running neck and neck with the federalists in that month's referendum. Clinton is not easy to embarrass. But he must have been a bit red-faced to revoke publicly the neutrality pledge he had made earlier that year at Chrétien's urging.

And so we come back to the misreported St. Jean Baptiste Day celebrations in Montreal. The false reports include the story in the *Gazette* insinuating that there was no political march following this year's St. Jean Baptiste Day parade simply because no politicians were marching. Truth be told, thousands of Quebec youth marched down La Rue Notre Dame shouting *Le Québec pour Québecois* (Quebec for Quebecers) and *Oui*, the latter indicating how they will vote in the likely referendum in 2000.

There are some wary and responsible voices in the Canadian media. The *National Post* ran a story on September 18 warning of the vitality of Quebec nationalism. And *Gazette* columnist Don MacPherson wrote the day after this year's parade that the celebration had a "strong political undercurrent" despite its friendly nature. But more typical was the column by Josée Legault, which appeared just below MacPherson's, in praise of the organizers' supposed decision to "de-politicize the parade."

The praise was not well received. When Guy Bothillier of La Societé Jean Baptiste addressed a huge crowd the night after the parade, he both warned and assured anyone misreading the friendly nature of this past year's celebration, "We are not playing bingo."

Well, at least the separatists are not playing bingo. As for the Canadian media, they just might be. Metaphorically speaking, it seems they are playing to cover the full bingo card. Or is it "cover up"?

John O'Neill writes from Detroit.

Letter From Jamaica

by Jeffrey Meyers

Jamaicas of Remembrance

◆

"Jamaicas of Remembrance stir
That send me reeling in."
—Emily Dickinson

Most visitors to Jamaica fly to Montego Bay on the north coast and head straight for the resort compound. Eating and drinking at an "all-in" price, confined to their bit of beach, pool, and garden, they are happily protected from reality. In January, I flew into Kingston on the south coast to visit my daughter, who was working there. We circled the whole island in

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a jeep. After two weeks, tired and rather depressed, I could have used a bit of security and peace. Maybe the package tourists are right.

Arriving in Kingston, I was struck by the contrast between the image conjured up by the famous figures who had lived on the island and the unnerving squalor and dense traffic of a Third World city. In the 1940's and 50's, Jamaica was still the sterling area of the British Empire. It attracted many wealthy expatriates and celebrities and radiated an aura of glamour. Clara Bow, Claudette Colbert, and Bette Davis owned houses there. But the image of the island was really created by three charming self-promoters—Ian Fleming, Noël Coward, and Errol Flynn—whose legends were greater than their achievements. All three built houses in Jamaica: Coward and Flynn in the hills of the north and east coasts, Fleming on the north shore. Far from the big tourist places, they all had spectacular views of the Blue Mountains, the white sandy beaches, and the shimmering turquoise sea. Compared to the splashy new-rich mansions of today's Long Island and Beverly Hills, their houses are surprisingly modest.

In 1946 (before the astonishing success of the James Bond novels), Fleming built Goldeneye, near Oracabessa and east of Discovery Bay (where Columbus landed in 1494) and Runaway Bay, an escape route for slaves. Bright neon-blue gateposts mark the entrance to his house. Deliberately simple, even austere, Goldeneye has rough, locally made furniture, canvas-covered chairs, and a blue concrete floor. Coward, who rented what he called the "barracks" for £50 a week in 1946, called it

> a perfectly ghastly house. We were very manly and pretended to like it. But I did get tired of the iron bedstead and the pictures of the snakes he had plastered all over the bedroom wall, and the *banquette* you sat on at the dining-room table, which was so narrow it bit into your bottom, and the cushions that felt as if they had been filled with chipped steel.

In 1951, after buying a small house for his guests on the coast at Blue Harbour, Coward built Firefly for himself and lived there in splendid isolation. Philip Hoare, his biographer, described the house as "part modernist 1930's bungalow, part military fort. The house had few rooms: a studio, a modest music room, and a sitting room, with its open, unglazed window, framing a grandiose wide-screen view of Port Maria, the successive bays beyond, and the Blue Mountains in the distance." Coward's lover and heir Graham Payn gave the house to the Jamaica Heritage Trust in 1978, and since then it has been open to the public.

After a brief tour conducted by an indifferent, ill-informed guide and a video of the Queen Mother's visit in 1966, tourists are left to strum the grand piano, wander through the grounds, see its covered-over swimming pool, and inspect the old pirate lookout, with thick stone walls and old flagged floors, which Coward used as a painting studio. They can view the concrete tomb where he is buried and the white marble slab that reads "Sir Noël Coward—1899-1973."

I'm fascinated by Errol Flynn and have been thinking of writing a book about him. He bought the 4,000-acre Boston Estate, in Priestman's River near Port Antonio, in 1948. When visiting the island he lived on his yacht, the *Zaca*, until he built his house in the late 1950's. We drove through the entrance gate near the Castle police station, up the steep and very rough road, and past the mountain of coconut husks that looks like a heap of Khmer Rouge skulls. I had a long talk with Leslie Marsh, manager of the estate, who was born in Jamaica of English and Portuguese parents and had fought in the Middle East in World War II. He lives in one rather rundown hilltop house, and Flynn's third wife, the actress Patrice Wymore, in another. The estate, which includes all the land from the crest of the hill down to the sea, is not doing well. It employs 60 workers and sells 25,000 coconuts a week. It also has 600 head of cattle that it cannot sell because the luxury hotels prefer to import duty-free beef from America.

Marsh had known Flynn toward the end of his life. He described the actor's lavish but rather joyless parties on Navy Island (which he once owned and is supposed to have lost in a card game) in Port Antonio harbor, opposite his other favorite hangout, the now burned-down Titchfield Hotel. Though scores of people swam, rowed, or motored out to Navy Island and got drunk at Flynn's expense, he hardly knew them and was usually too drunk to recognize anyone. I'd heard rumors that Flynn had a look-alike illegitimate black son who drove a taxi in Port Antonio, and I was very keen to meet him. But both Marsh and Earl Levy, owner of the nearby Trident Hotel where Wymore had a boutique, assured me that no such person existed. Flynn died of a heart attack in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1959. Though he wanted to be buried in Jamaica, he wound up, like so many film stars, in Forest Lawn—that Disneyland for spooks.

Just before leaving for Jamaica, I'd spoken to Flynn's daughter Rory (by his second wife Nora Eddington), who urged me to visit the estate and let her know how things were going. I'd hoped to see Patrice Wymore, who had inherited the estate and had run it since Flynn's death. I particularly wanted to ask her about his urge to self-destruction. But I arrived at a bad time. Wymore, now aged 72, had recently had a cataract operation, had just returned from a trip to Europe, and was still in bed at noon—exhausted by jet lag. Moreover, Arnella, her daughter by Flynn, had died five weeks earlier of a drug overdose. Though Wymore agreed to see me the next morning, she was still asleep when I phoned at the appointed time. Not knowing if she would ever appear, I had to press on to the next stage of my inexorable journey around the island.

In the interior, something of the old Jamaica still remains. The rivers, waterfalls, and jungly mountain scenery along the winding roads are spectacular. They provide a tremendous contrast to the tacky coast road where everything man-made is rundown and hideous. Eighteenth-century plantations have gracious mansions with splendid vistas, manicured gardens, and rough-hewn slave quarters at the edge of the bush. Greenwood Great House was built in 1790 by a cousin of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and George Orwell's ancestor was the absentee owner of plantations and slaves in Jamaica. Some of these plantations now offer uncomfortable rooms and mediocre food at exorbitant prices.

On the northeast coast, the low, old-fashioned hotels set in lavish gardens and filled with tropical birds and flowers reminded me of the hospitality of colonial Africa. In the Dragon Bay Hotel in Port Antonio—a town that was, compared to Ocho Ríos and Negril, delightfully empty—the Jolly Boys Combo, an endearingly elderly quartet, played and sang traditional Calypso music while we drank Planter's Punch on the veranda and watched the heavy toads hop slowly up

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the uneven steps. Port Antonio also has the Blue Lagoon, setting for the film of that name, in which Brooke Shields and her adolescent companion, on a desert isle far from the restraints of society, discover the innocent joys of sex.

The lobby of the Trident Castle near Port Antonio exhibited a witty and fantastic painting in the naive style entitled *Her Majesty Queen Victoria in the Company of Selected Inmates from the Portland Home for Bad Girls, Watches a Display of Precision Dwarf-Tossing [into basketball nets] by Local Dwarf Masters at the Castle Trident, Port Antonio, May 18, 1871.* As we admired the painting and inquired about the imposing Trident Castle down the road from the hotel, the owner, Earl Levy, hospitably offered to give us a tour of his private domain. Its stone floors, high ceilings, sweeping staircases, *trompe l'oeil* murals, swimming pool, lavish gardens, and fabulous views of the bay and the sea reminded me of the mansions modeled on French châteaux that line Bellevue Avenue in Newport, Rhode Island. Yet it seemed a comfortable, livable house, and the family now rents it out for weekend parties and luxurious weddings.

In Ocho Ríos, we had free tennis lessons and an all-inclusive price. Many guests made the most of a good deal, gobbling and guzzling until they passed out toward midnight. The more refined types (like myself), fearful of appearing too greedy, partook with restraint—and afterward regretted our delicacy. This hotel turned out to be my favorite—the most comfortable and civilized. I would have been happy to spend the whole time there, but we had booked ahead and had to keep moving.

As we bumped along the potholed roads, filled with muddy water after the tropical squalls, I was amused by the evocative expressions on signs, billboards, and walls: Sir Plucky Chickens, Fish Tea (soup), Mannish Water (virile goats' testicle soup), Obey Your Thirst, Murder Mr. Trust (no credit), Don't Piss on This Wall (someone, of course, was pissing against it), and Only God Himself Alone Can Judge Me.

Why, then, with all these attractions, did I find the atmosphere so repellent? The change from the glamour of colonial times, symbolized by Fleming, Coward, and Flynn, to the grim squalor of contemporary Jamaica was effected, after independence in 1962, by the fanatical socialist and nationalist prime minister, Michael Norman Manley. He forced out the American owners of the bauxite industry (still the most profitable business on the island, but suffering from international competition) and ruined relations with the United States. His policies quickly destroyed the economy, raised unemployment to unprecedented levels, and caused mass emigration. Violence drove out most of the English residents and frightened away the tourists.

The economic condition of the country is desperate. A white Jamaican who owned a successful insurance agency told me that the economy is bad and going to hell. Foreign investors are wary of opening factories because of the high cost of electricity, restrictive labor unions, and difficulties of dealing with the government. An American Peace Corps volunteer, working as a sewage engineer, told me it was hard to get anything done because of typical Third World problems: bureaucratic obstruction, government corruption, and ingrained resistance to change.

Apart from marijuana, rum, and coffee (inexpertly roasted and very expensive at more than $20 per pound), almost nothing is exported from the island. Almost all manufactured goods, from packaged food and toilet paper to clothing and electronic equipment, have to be imported at very high prices. Anyone who can afford a plane ticket shops in Miami. Growing ganja is a flourishing industry, and drug-smuggling a major source of income. Americans posing as tourists try to get in on the action and frequently land in Jamaican prisons.

There's 75 percent unemployment among men and massive emigration from the overpopulated and apparently hopeless country. Two-and-a-half million Jamaicans live on the island, and two million are in America. American visas are in great demand and difficult to obtain. Jamaican employees at the U.S. Consulate were arrested for selling them for $2,000 each. The crime rate is extremely high, violence is endemic, and most of Kingston—a hideously squalid town—is too dangerous to visit, even in daytime. Security (private guards, dogs, alarms) is one of the few growth industries, which suggests both the climate of fear and the widespread distrust of the corrupt and inefficient police. The radical change from the pleasantly old to the menacingly new Jamaica is reflected in novels about the island: from Richard Hughes' *High Wind in Jamaica* (1929) and Alec Waugh's *Island in the Sun* (1956) to V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* (1975) and Russell Banks' *The Book of Jamaica* (1980).

The road out of Kingston was littered with rotting vegetables, squashed papayas, and pancaked roadkill. The menacing mood and somber scene, and especially the contrast between the luxury hotels and local tin-roofed shanties, once again reminded me of Africa. Drowsy-looking men, idling around the shacks on the side of the road, stared dully—perhaps resentfully—at us as we jolted by in our new jeep.

Tin cans, glinting in the bright sun, decorated the points of spiky cacti. Vultures, flapping heavily away at our approach, pecked out the eyes of dead dogs. Next to a sign that read "J.P. Stewart, Painter," J.P. himself was standing at an easel at the side of the road. One young man, dressed only in brightly colored underpants, had wandered out to the middle of the road as he brushed his teeth, and cars swerved around him. Someone else ran by in a hurry, carrying two macabre cow's legs, sawn off above the hoof and dripping with blood.

Far from welcoming tourists as a source of jobs and revenue, the impoverished and discontented people—notably lacking good humor or natural gaiety—were touchy and volatile. Except for hotel employees who were paid to be polite or touts trying to wheedle something out of you, they were sullen at best, and often quite hostile. Most restaurants, bars, and shops subjected their clients to "Street Thunder," a brain-shattering blast of reggae music, the legacy of the local god, Bob Marley. Asking anyone to turn down the sound was considered a mortal insult.

Most of the staff at expensive hotels were poorly trained, and the service was often ludicrous. A waiter at one hotel showed us a bottle of wine without a label, which had fallen unobserved into a bucket of melted ice. A porter at another place tipped our luggage off the cart and onto the wet grass while attempting to transport it from the lobby to our room. The cook who came with one villa and couldn't be dismissed insisted on serving dinner at her convenience, not ours, and transformed the spaghetti into a glutinous mush. A waitress who dropped a syrup-laden knife between my daughter's bare legs exclaimed: "Look where it done choose to fall!"

We began each morning and evening

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at our luxury-priced but quite funky hotel in Treasure Beach with a cockroach hunt, competing intensely for the largest bag. Though the place had advertised a beach, the sand had disappeared in the last hurricane and left jagged rocks that made it difficult to enter the water. Inspired by the well-intentioned but naive concept of Community Tourism, the management encouraged the local inhabitants to wander through the gardens, splash noisily in the tiny swimming pool, and blast the reggae music. Some of the guests were frightened by the unfamiliar interlopers. When one of them tried to teach a young American child to swim and put on her hat to keep it dry, she exclaimed, "Take my hat off your stinky head!"

Jamaica is very churchy. On weekends, long processions of women in their flowery and flouncy Sunday or (in the case of Seventh-Day Adventists) Saturday best head for the abundant houses of worship. Large crowds gather outdoors to hear the Bible-thumping hellfire preachers. Despite the strong dose of religion, Jamaican attitudes to sex, marriage, and fidelity are elastic. Illegitimate children are common, and there's no stigma attached to them. It's not unusual for a couple to live together for years, produce a brood of children, and then marry, complete with white dress and huge party.

The government does not recognize the existence of the AIDS epidemic that, according to a public-health worker I spoke to, is ravaging the island. Nevertheless, the locals prey on the tourists, and many foreign girls feel their holiday experience is incomplete without a brief "romantic" encounter. One truly broken-down man approached my young daughter on the beach and brazenly said: "I give you my attentions. Keep yo' body clean and ready." Dodging the evening dope peddlers on the beach at Negril, I saw a Jamaican stud standing up behind a fruit stall and having sex with a tourist girl, who seemed oblivious to the small audience gathered to observe them.

More sinister events also take place on the beach. A middle-aged American, on holiday with his wife and child, was found at 3:00 A.M., face down on the beach, his lungs filled with sand. His wallet and Rolex watch had been stolen, but the police—anxious to avoid bad publicity—claimed he had fallen down drunk or high and asphyxiated himself. The results of the autopsy were inconclusive, and no one tried to determine if his wife (sole beneficiary of a large insurance policy) was involved in foul play. When a second autopsy showed evidence of strangulation, a Jamaican was arrested and charged with murder.

Every night, we would watch the evening news to keep up with the latest horrors. The bulletins were read by my daughter's friend, who would then ring her cell phone to get her approval rating. There were three recurrent stories. Shootings by and of the police were very popular. The second concerned the grisly car accidents on horrendous roads: "Two Ladas collide and kill six people, who were taken to the Kingston Public Hospital and pronounced dead." The last showed roadblocks to protest the state of the roads, burning tires, and looting—the Jamaican idea of a good time—and interviews with enraged shopkeepers who had once again lost their entire stock.

While I was there, Jamaica seemed about to explode—and soon did. In April, the government suddenly increased the gasoline tax by 50 percent, without adequately preparing the public or explaining that the money would (supposedly) be used for road works and public transit. Protesters, going back into action, set up street barricades in Kingston, where four people were killed and 140 arrested. The authorities attempted to deal with the looting and violence by imposing a curfew and ordering soldiers into the streets. Airlines canceled flights, and the U.S. Embassy warned American residents and tourists to stay off the streets.

Under British rule, Jamaica was poor and rural, but it had a stable currency and an efficient administration. Today, the people are still poor, but expectations have been unrealistically raised by independence and Manley-type nationalism. Everyone wants to leave, and the most talented and ambitious young people have gone to America and England. Since the wealth from tourism does not trickle down very far, those who remain are sullen, edgy, and aggressive. These traits don't lead to the sort of skilled service one gets in Europe, where such jobs have a distinct tradition and status. The vacuum caused by high unemployment and deep discontent has been filled by drugs; and Jamaica, like Haiti, has become a criminal conduit from Latin America to the United States and Europe. No Jamaican would want to return to colonial rule. But it will take a miracle, or a host of well-run industries, to stem the tide of emigration, renew the economy, and make the island attractive enough to bring back large numbers of tourists. Right now, it's more like an African country than a Caribbean paradise.

Jeffrey Meyers, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, has recently published biographies of Edmund Wilson, Robert Frost, and Humphrey Bogart. He has just completed a life of George Orwell for Norton.

Letter From the Argentario

by Andrei Navrozov

The Show of Shows

◆

Say what you will, there is no dame like an Italian *grande dame*. Though based on my own experience, this claim is easily supported by any amount of independent observation as the number of subjects to whom it applies, given that the history of the aristocracy in this country resembles schematic representations of nuclear fission in old physics textbooks, is simply vast. Moreover, the rest of Italian women—those who do not fit the type under discussion for all sorts of reasons—nonetheless model themselves, and their defining affectations and aspirations, on the aspect of the female character which is not often illuminated by fashion magazines, television, or Hollywood. In that very real sense in which American women want to be thin, French women want to be clean, and English women want to be elegant, Italian women want most of all to be grand.

There was a *grande dame* who came to dinner the other day, and she was telling a story. I cannot remember exactly what her story was about, but she was talking about American art and went on to postulate, plausibly enough I should say, that artists like to bite the hand that feeds them, meaning their patrons. At which point I interrupted her, because, as happens now and then, a witticism had begun to form in the back of my mind, and then rolled over to the front of my head

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like a loose dumbbell, and then I simply couldn't keep it in any longer and out it tumbled: "The *invisible* hand, you mean." Those who sympathize with my predicament will appreciate my reasoning. The patrons are mostly businessmen, right? And business makes you think of Adam Smith, and Adam Smith makes you think of the invisible hand, and the idea of biting a hand which is invisible is pretty funny.

Which, clear as daylight, was the only reason I'd interrupted her, and yes, of course I agree, in the final analysis it's a stupid joke. But aren't all jokes stupid in the final analysis? And don't you think that a friendly chuckle, or at worst an admonitory pause, would be called for at that juncture, even if the interrupted party had something original and vital to tell about American art and artists? To say that the *grande dame* froze is like saying that God liked the world. No, she simply turned to stone, which was naturally the costliest kind of marble. I can only compare her with Osip Mandelshtam's "neoclassical shawl" cascading in bas-relief about Anna Akhmatova's shoulders unto all eternity. She was Phédre, she was Niobe, she was the shadow of an evaporated mother in Hiroshima. I had interrupted her in her role of *grande dame*, and to say that I felt like a rotter is like saying there is some good food in this part of Tuscany.

Let me change tack for a moment, because I just came back from the darkest Maremma countryside which I had been scouring for *culatello*, a kind of ham which literally begins where other hams leave off, to bring back with me to Venice. Every bar, in just about every one-bar town in the mountains that I visited, had the following announcement in the window. I swear I am not hamming it up for effect:

DENJI SHOW
presents

A One-Hour-Long Spectacle.
International Attractions. Jugglers.
A Charming Trained Doggy
Number. A Giant Squid, over 500
kg. of Gelatinous Muscle. An
Anaconda, Strangler of Men.

INCREDIBLE BUT TRUE!
LIVE CROCODILES.

A young woman cheats death in a crystal bowl full of scorpions, black widows, tarantulas, and poisonous snakes of every description. And, for the first time ever,

LIVE PIRANHA!

Here some cynical sourpuss may grumble that the great Denji Show of Orbetello is not so unlike what passes for entertainment in the drawing rooms of Belgravia, to say nothing of the bedrooms of Manhattan. That is not my point, but the carper would be right in a sense. To be grand, in the sense defined by the history and traditions of Europe, is above all to entertain and be entertained in accordance with established convention, the very principle I had had the temerity to subvert with my dumb joke about the invisible hand. The dumb joke was that it was I who had bitten the hand of civilized custom. The dumb joke was on me.

All of which is to say that the ladies of Manciano, Magliano, and Pitigliano, who come down from the mountains to the noisy and shameless seaside to attend the first performance of the Denji as if it were a season premiere at La Scala, are being grand in a way in which their British or American counterpart, who buys a DVD player instead, cannot even imagine herself wishing to be, to say nothing of being. Because here life is about being grand at whatever social level has fallen to your share. Elsewhere, life is about keeping up with the Joneses.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the Michelin Guide, fat, red, French, and yet the world's chief justiciar and uncorrupt arbiter of gastronomic achievement, awards stars to just two Venetian establishments apart from the implacable Harry's Bar ("Patrons are reminded," Cipriani writes on the menu, "that the ringing of cellular phones may interfere with the preparation of risotto"). These two are Da Fiori, in the fashionable San Polo quarter, and a place called Autoespresso, with the gloomy and slightly venal address of Via Fratelli Bandiera 34, deep in the industrial wilderness of the Mestre suburbs.

Whether in Florence or in Venice, in Orbetello or in Mestre, come along and watch an Italian woman, even of the lowliest station, order her morning coffee at the local bar, ticket in divinely manicured hand. Properly considered, and mindful of the algebraic assumption that the *x* of coffee and the *y* of milk are the only conceivable variables in any equation describing what she is actually about to order, this really is entertainment to end all entertainment. This is both Maria from Manciano, trembling at the sight of *la gigantesca piovra di oltre 500 kg. di musculo gelatinoso*, and Violetta from *La Traviata* on the Milan stage, swooning Swinburneanly among orchids and lilies, in a single burst of blinding theatricality:

"I'll have mine with just a little foam, please, but not too much foam, and in a glass, and not too hot. No, not a *macchiato*, just an ordinary cappuccino with a little foam. Just a little bit. And in a glass. And not too hot."

"Can I have one with approximately half the usual amount of foam, but I would like the foam to be extremely hot, and the coffee not hot at all. Just warm, please. Yes, warm. No, the coffee warm, and the foam extremely hot. No, not a *macchiato* with very hot foam, just a cappuccino."

"Do me a favor, make me a cappuccino just the way you made it for the man there, but with less foam, more like a *macchiato*, but yes, with the chocolate, and I would like the coffee to be near room temperature. No, not a *macchiato* with somewhat tepid coffee, I would just like a normal cappuccino like the man over there was having."

"I'll have my usual *latte macchiato*. But today, could you make it just a little less strong, and with just a smudge of foam? No, actually I won't have that. I'll have a camomile tea, but not too much camomile, like you put yesterday. That was too strong for me. I *was* going to tell you, but then my sister called from Padua."

Now compare these glimpses of Italian womanhood with the scene I witnessed last spring at the Florian in Venice. Two American women approach the bar, and one of them says to the barman: "*Latte, per favore*." He puts a magnificently appetizing glass of milk, all beady from condensation and reminiscent in its opacity of Bianca Sforza's pearls in the famous portrait, on the neatly folded and very starched napkin in front of her. "No," she says loudly, as if speaking to a deaf man, "*latte*, I wanted a *latte*." "But miss," he replies in English, "*latte* is milk, no?" "No," she says, "I mean, *latte*!" And then, hopelessly, turning to walk out of the most famous cafe in the world: "Aw, forget it."

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

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RELIGION

Interpreting Compassion

by Janet Scott Barlow

Because the *New York Times* is a continual source of annoyance and amazement to me, I was predictably stunned and incensed to read last May that this most self-important of publications was presenting as news the following information: "[T]here is no evidence of an anti-poor mentality, at least as measured by reported [financial] giving, among political and theological conservatives." To whom, I wondered, is this news? How ignorant of, and isolated from, politically and theologically conservative Americans must one be to find it "surprising" that they are not "anti-poor, a la Ebenezer Scrooge, in their personal outlook"?

To be fair to the *New York Times*, the paper was only passing on the latest findings from the world of sociology. (To be fair to the sociologists, however, they made no mention of Ebenezer Scrooge. That reference—so deft, so subtle—was the *Times*' own.)

The *Times* article in question was a summation of a study that appeared in the September 1998 issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. Curious to know whether the original survey contained anything that could have encouraged the *New York Times* in its glib exercise in stereotyping, I obtained a back issue of the publication and read the article. Titled "Who Gives to the Poor? The Influence of Religious Tradition and Political Location on the Personal Generosity of Americans Toward the Poor," it is the work of Mark D. Regnerus, Christian Smith, and David Sikkink.

While "Who Gives to the Poor?" is filled with the fairly daunting (to me) language of science ("covariates," "logit regression," "bivariate statistics"), its premise is plain enough: The political conservatism of hardcore Christians, especially Protestants, is evident in their opposition to typical (counterproductive) tax-and-spend governmental approaches to the problems of poverty; in turn, opposition to typical tax-and-spend governmental approaches to the problems of poverty is suggestive of "hostility," i.e., stinginess, toward the poor. If that sounds like circular thinking, one reason might be that Messrs. Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink characterize their primary assumption—that "religious and political conservatism . . . predict[s] less giving to the poor"—with two different terms that they appear to believe are synonymous, terms which are in fact not synonymous at all.

The authors refer to the premise under question as an "hypothesis," an obvious choice of words, *hypothesis* implying the application of objective, specialized knowledge or intellection—an open-minded exploration guided by the scientific method. But they also characterize their assumption as "conventional wisdom," a not-so-understandable description, since that term suggests a widely accepted idea that may or may not, in actual fact, be widely accepted, a generalized view that may or may not have factual validity, a supposition devoid of scientific context. An hypothesis is a theory to be tested. Conventional wisdom can encompass anything from an opinion to a stereotype to a bias.

To hypothesize that religious conservatives are ungenerous to the poor is one thing. To suppose via conventional wisdom that religious conservatives are *self-evidently* ungenerous to the poor is something else altogether. And while I welcome any public acknowledgment that conservatives of whatever variety are not heartless meanies, I find it difficult to see the significance of a study that concludes, "Fundamentally, making the jump from economic conservatism to declaring persons to be *hostile* toward the poor seems unwarranted." With all due respect, that's like saying, "Making the jump from an affinity for green beans to an hostility toward tomatoes seems unwarranted." What on earth do these things have to do with each other? Nothing at all, of course, unless "conventional wisdom" dictates that if you've tasted one vegetable, you've tasted 'em all.

Here's what *is* interesting about "Who Gives to the Poor?" First, Mr. Regnerus *et al.*, use a specific standard to measure generosity toward the poor: the proportionate amount of one's personal financial resources given directly to organizations serving the poor and needy. This is an excellent standard, it seems to me, because it focuses not on abstractions or attitudes (talk, after all, is cheap), but on specific, individual, self-initiated action. Second, the authors determine that the greater one's personal religious commitment (or "religiosity," as they call it), the more likely one is to give "a lot" to the poor. Third, they conclude that conservative Protestants, especially those "who have used politically conservative Christian leaders and organizations such as the Christian Coalition to assist them in voting," report giving significantly more money to poverty relief organizations than do other Christian groups.

In other words, the authors discover that religion trumps politics, even when the two commingle. I think a possible reason these sociologists end up "surprised" by their discovery is that their method is to go from A to C without examining B: the degree of personal religious commitment. While "religiosity" is listed as a factor in the study (an "independent variable"), its actual meaning, as a context for human choices, goes unexplored. The difference between a surprise and an inevitability rests within this unasked question: What are devout Christians committed *to*?

"Who Gives to the Poor?" concludes that, among members of all Christian denominations, those who most often give "a lot" of their personal income to the poor are evangelical Protestants. If one understands the basic fact that the first commitment of a devout evangelical is to honor the teachings of Christ (which are found in the Bible, a helpful resource in cases like this); and if one further understands that those teachings include instruction on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned—if one understands this, the only "surprise" one might experience is the unlikely discovery that such persons *don't* give a lot to those in need. It is slightly demoralizing to realize that only by disproving an already flawed assumption is the compassion of the more generous among us made credible.

To feel demoralized, however, is not necessarily to be downhearted. Before concluding this encounter with the sci-

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ence of sociology, let us make a brief detour to the real world, a place where surprises, and even mysteries, are often welcome.

I know a man, a self-professed agnostic, who, as a member of the advisory board of the local Salvation Army post, devotes significant amounts of his personal time and income to that organization. He also makes available to the Army his business expertise and the marketing resources of his company. He does everything from soliciting donations from corporate leaders for the Army's Building Fund to taking his turn during the holidays as a bell-ringer beside a red Army kettle.

The agnostic does all of this while fully aware that the Salvation Army's mission is, in its own words, "to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination." Preaching the gospel is not the agnostic's mission, but it isn't his antimission either. The agnostic devotes himself to the Salvation Army because he admires the integrity of commitment that is the basis for, and the human behaviors that result from, actively practiced Christianity.

Okay, that's the agnostic. Now for my aunt. She is 76, a fundamentalist Baptist and a biblical literalist who tithes to her church, gives and raises money for the poor, prays with the dying, and spreads the Word to the unconverted—all the while radiating an aura of perfect serenity in her faith.

What is engaging about the agnostic and my aunt is the confusion they create when we try to factor their beliefs and behavior into "Who Gives to the Poor?" If we go by the initial "conventional wisdom" of the study, the agnostic's politics, which are conservative, would give no hint of his generosity to the poor and the needy. But my aunt's politics—a child of the Depression and ever loyal to the memory of FDR, she's never voted for a Republican in her life—would indicate little of her resolute religious conservatism. According to the conventional wisdom of "Who Gives to the Poor?" the stereotype of my aunt's Christian conservatism ought suggest political conservatism and thus "hostility" toward the poor. And the stereotype of the agnostic's economic conservatism ought suggest—well, political conservatism and thus "hostility" toward the poor. In sum: A conservative is a conservative is a conservative.

After confusing things with the agnostic and my aunt, let's conclude—heck, let's go for broke—by taking a look at Al Gore. The Vice President's 1997 federal tax return showed an adjusted gross income of $197,729, from which the total financial charitable contribution of Gore and his wife amounted to $353. According to the Internal Revenue Service, $353 is one-tenth the typical contribution amount for Gore's income level. In fact, the average American family, which earned around $35,000 in 1997, gave almost $700 to charity. For families making over $100,000, charitable donations averaged nearly $3,000.

In years prior to 1997, Al Gore and his wife reported giving far more to charity, although "charity" in this context is a questionable term, since a $50,000 gift in 1992 went not to the poor but to the University of Tennessee to endow a chair in the memory of Gore's late sister. And in 1998, motivated possibly by rediscovered generosity, certainly by political considerations, the Gores upped their giving considerably. Still, there it is, there it will always be: $353.

According to Al Gore himself, his religious commitment is serious and his faith runs deep. What's more, he is a man who, with an ease that suggests it's a part of his gene pattern, can speechify on the obligations of social responsibility, the evils of indifference to suffering, and the presence of enemies among us who would thwart (his own) efforts to relieve human need.

Gore is, in short, completely at home in an attitude of moral superiority. And in 1997 he gave $353 to charity. I don't know how a sociologist would interpret that fact, but I do know that, while it would make the agnostic laugh and prompt my aunt to put Gore on her prayer list, it wouldn't lead either of them to stereotype Al Gore as anti-poor. And the *New York Times*? Well, surely you remember that big front-page story in the *Times*, the one which began, "Al Gore, a la Ebenezer Scrooge, donated a paltry $353 to charity in 1997, raising the question: Is the Vice President hostile to the poor?"

Of course, the *New York Times* printed no such thing. In fact, my own conventional wisdom tells me that the *Times*' conventional wisdom, like the conventional wisdom (and possibly the mental synapses) of Al Gore himself, makes impossible the simultaneous consideration of Al Gore and Ebenezer Scrooge. For the *New York Times*, so oblivious in its isolation, so confident in the act of judgment, politics in the form of social values always trumps religion; often it defines religion; sometimes it *is* religion. And a conservative is a conservative is a conservative.

Janet Scott Barlow writes from Cincinnati, Ohio. Her website, "Out Here: Commentary From Middle America on Politics and Culture," can be accessed at www.Out-Here.org.

A Postmodern Yahweh for Episcopalians

by Mark Tooley

I had expected to find a small gathering of eccentric Episcopalians in a basement lecture hall. Instead, the National Cathedral was overflowing with a Christmas Eve-sized crowd. The draw was not a holiday but a debate between "Jesus scholars" Prof. Marcus Borg of Oregon State University and the Rev. N.T. Wright of Litchfield Cathedral, England. Over 1,300 Washingtonians squeezed into the normally ample gothic sanctuary to hear these gentlemen debate whether the New Testament's accounts of a divine Jesus are history or metaphor.

Borg and Wright are touring America to tout their joint book venture: *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (Harper San Francisco). Wright is a theological traditionalist, although he does not like being called that. And Borg is a leader in liberal revisionism's most fertile publicity machine, the Jesus Seminar.

Both are bearded Anglicans with erudite manners, but—their avuncular protests to the contrary—their similarities end there. Borg believes the "pre-Easter" Jesus was merely an heroic spokesman for social justice. The "post-Easter" Jesus who claimed divinity and worked miracles was actually a creation of the early Church as a metaphorical expression of its faith. Wright counters that the first Christians placed their faith in a Jewish prophet who not only claimed equality with God, but whose Virgin Birth, miracles, and Resurrection from the dead lend credence to the claim. Both Borg and Wright agree that the Enlighten-

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ment stress on science and factuality has distorted Christianity. Borg critiques the Enlightenment as a postmodernist mystic, while Wright does so as a Christian classicist.

Their arguments have been published in *USA Today* and aired on National Public Radio, and their debate over Jesus is hyped as Something New. Actually, it is about 2,000 years old. Wright, although trying to speak the language of the academy rather than the pulpit, is still defending Christian orthodoxy. Borg's Jesus, who is divine only in the hearts of His believers, differs little from the Jesus of Rudolf Bultmann 50 years ago, Albert Schweitzer 100 years ago, or Thomas Jefferson 200 years ago.

According to Wright, Jesus professed His divinity more through His actions than His words. "If we look long and hard at Jesus, we will find out who God is," Wright said. This God is not a deist or New Age deity, but the "strange" God of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Jesus "was doing what God was supposed to do." As to questions about the New Testament's veracity, Wright said, "We know more about Jesus than how the Gospels got written." But in general, Wright sees the miraculous events surrounding Jesus as history, not poetry.

In contrast, Borg sees the Gospels as "history remembered and history metaphorized." Some stories happened, while others are completely metaphor. Tales about the Virgin Birth, miracles, multiplying bread loaves, and walking on the sea should be seen as the latter. Borg said scholarship (presumably as embodied in the Jesus Seminar) must decide which parts of the Gospels are "early" and which parts reflect the much later "voice of community."

Borg disagreed with Wright about Jesus's self-understanding, His death, and Easter. Jesus "probably" did not see Himself as messiah. His death was a "consequence" of His actions but not His vocation, making Him similar to the martyred Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mahatma Gandhi. And, in Borg's view, the corpse and tomb of Jesus are "irrelevant."

"Truth is founded in the continuing reality of Jesus among believers," Borg claimed, rather than a strict reliance upon Scripture. He sees Jesus as a Jewish mystic or "spirit person," like Buddha. And like Jesus or Buddha, we can experience God through "shamanic" or "altered states of consciousness." Only the Enlightenment, Borg surmised, would deny the validity of such moments.

The early Church described its spiritual experiences in the language of miracles and resurrection, according to Borg, who thinks we distort their message with a literal reading. But Wright finds that approach misleading. "You're saying the early Church took non-literal, non-concrete ideas and then historicized them," Wright retorted. "Metaphor is being used to cover a multitude of sins."

Borg asked Wright if there were any limit to what he would accept as history. For example, could anyone multiply loaves of bread? Wright said he rebels against the Enlightenment's automatic dismissal of the miraculous. And he points out that the Gospel narrative uniquely equips Jesus with extraordinary powers. "It's really hard to imagine these things without imagining an interventionist God," Borg protested. Wright responded that it was an erroneous legacy of the Enlightenment to speak of a "split-level universe" in which God does or does not intervene. God's miracles should not be seen as an intervention into His own universe, Wright said, but more appropriately as "unique" and "dramatic."

Much of the discussion may have seemed too academic to the audience. Within an hour, many people left the cathedral, and within 90 minutes, nearly half the crowd had departed. A debate between Borg and Jerry Falwell might have been less cordial, but the sanctuary would have stayed filled.

The audience of Washingtonians appeared upscale, Episcopalian, and very "inside the Beltway." I assumed that Borg, as the mystical postmodernist, would be the crowd's favorite against a clever but still traditionalist cathedral dean. But most questions from the pews expressed dismay that Borg could profess Christianity while denying some of the faith's key tenets. One questioner asked Borg if the Holy Spirit had misled the Church's interpretation of Scripture for 2,000 years. "I don't know if the Holy Spirit would be helpful in judging the factuality of the Gospels," responded Borg. "The Holy Spirit is irrelevant in that decision-making process." In response to another query about his view on the Resurrection, Borg surmised that the disciples safely waited until Jesus's corpse was rotted beyond recognition before making their claims.

No cathedral columns collapsed in response to Borg's impieties; obviously, the God of Episcopalians is patient and long-suffering. The remainder of the audience politely applauded and filed out to purchase copies of the debaters' books in the lobby.

Borg professes to be a practicing Christian. His wife is an Episcopal priest. "Tom [Wright] and I share a vision of the Christian life. Our disagreements are in theology. Does it matter if Jesus thought He was messiah? Tom says yes. I say no."

Good English gentleman that he is, Wright accepts Borg's profession of faith. Although unmentioned in the cathedral, Borg has said that Christianity is a temporary "prism" through which to view the sacred, a prism which eventually will be displaced by other spiritualities. If the Christian faith survives at all, it will resemble Zoroastrianism as a quaint and tiny sect, he predicts. He describes himself as a "panentheist" who believes that all matter is a part of the great divine spirit.

One audience member asked Borg if he really believed in the biblical god Yahweh. "Sure," he replied. Of course, as a good postmodernist, he reserves the right to define Yahweh as he chooses, Yahweh's self-revelatory nature notwithstanding. Left unaddressed in this discussion was one central question: Does Yahweh approve of Borg's consignment of Him to the realm of subjective imagination? The debate would have had more spark if Wright had suggested that Yahweh very well may not.

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GUNS

The Most Dangerous Amendment

by William R. Tonso

One evening a few years back, I was channel-surfing when I ran across a panel discussion of efforts to restrict children's access to smut and violence on TV. One of the panelists was former New York mayor Ed Koch; another was the president of one of the major TV networks. The latter was quite agitated by

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proposed regulatory measures that he felt undermined the First Amendment and paved the way to censorship. I anticipated his position; however, I didn't anticipate Koch's reply. The former mayor pointed out that the slippery-slope argument that the TV honcho was making was exactly the same as that made by those who saw all attempts at gun control as undermining the Second Amendment and paving the way to gun confiscation. Hoisted by his own petard, the TV honcho's response was hilarious. He blanched and managed to sputter out something to the effect that some slippery slopes were more desirable than others.

I can't remember who that TV executive was or what network he headed, but it really doesn't make any difference. I'd be willing to bet, and I'm not a betting man, that the vast majority of gatekeepers of the mainstream electronic and print media, entertainment as well as news, would have responded to a perceived threat to the First Amendment just as he did, and that they would have been equally nonplussed when called upon to reconcile their views on the First Amendment with their views on the Second Amendment. In First Amendment-loving journalistic circles, "The Second Amendment gets no respect," as Mike Moore, then editor of *The Quill*, the magazine of the Society of Professional Journalists, acknowledged in a column by that title in the March 1990 issue of his magazine. Charlton Heston, the movie actor who has become the president of the National Rifle Association, once drove home the same point before the National Press Club, and what he and Moore had to say applies to mainstream media circles in general.

In a *USA Today* column written when he was president of NBC, Michael Gartner called for the repeal of the Second Amendment. Tom Brokaw, Sam Donaldson, Michael Kinsley, George Will, Hodding Carter, Martin Schram, Leonard Larsen, Don Shoemaker, Bob Moos, Robert Reno, and the editors of the *Washington Post* have either dismissed the right to keep and bear arms as a collective right, or called it an outdated individual right that has withered away or that should be repealed. And Robert Altman, the producer of ABC's *Gun*, a blatantly anti-gun-ownership series from 1997, acknowledges that he "disdains the prevalence of guns in American homes." As he told a *Washington Post* reporter: "I don't care what the founding fathers said—they didn't have a police force to call on." In a 1993 *Editor & Publisher* column, former *Boston Globe* editor Thomas Winship ignored the Second Amendment altogether when he called for a national newspaper crusade against guns.

Parade posed the following rhetorical question, complete with answer, to anyone thinking about entering its photography contest celebrating the 1991 bicentennial of the Bill of Rights: "How would you convey the sense of the Second Amendment in a photograph? Perhaps a soldier or a Marine or a sailor or an airman departing for duty, a scene with a military flavor, *a graduation*, or maybe a National Guardsman helping in a setting unrelated to arms or battle" (emphasis added). This after informing readers that we have long since overcome the fears of the federal government that had "inspired the language of" the amendment.

Life's bicentennial treatment of the Second Amendment acknowledged that an armed populace was necessary when the Bill of Rights was ratified, but made it clear that widespread gun ownership is troublesome now and that the amendment is anachronistic. A 1984 *Atlanta Constitution* political cartoon had Benjamin Franklin (who had nothing to do with the Second Amendment) commenting to his colleagues: "We'd better say it's for a 'well-regulated militia' or every nut in the country will think he has a right to own a gun." And a television special on the Bill of Rights back in the 1970's included a symbolic representation of each of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The logo for the Second Amendment, which was given short shrift in the discussion, looked like it had been lifted off of a box of "Arm and Hammer" baking soda—a hammer, not a sword or a gun, gripped in a hand at the end of a muscular arm with a rolled-up sleeve. One could get the impression that the Second Amendment guaranteed us the right to *bare* our arms.

I could go on and on, but publisher Lyle Stuart's comments bring me back to my central point. Stuart once justified publishing *The Turner Diaries*, the militantly racist and antisemitic novel that allegedly served as convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh's inspiration, in this way: "I'm a nut on just a few things in life. I've always tested the limits of the First Amendment. I'm a great believer in letting anybody publish the most outrageous, unpopular things there are." Ah, but Stuart has a social conscience. He donates one dollar of every sale of this $12 paperback to "an anti-handgun organization." Another deep-thinking First Amendment supporter who completely ignores Second Amendment concerns.

The Founding Fathers left us a mile-wide paper trail explaining the purpose of the Second Amendment. Several scholarly books and over 50 law review articles (many of them by prominent, non-gun-owning, liberal scholars like Sanford Levinson of the University of Texas, William Van Alstyne of Duke, and Akhil Amar of Yale) have detailed this paper trail for anyone willing to take the time to read them. Consider what James Madison's friend Tench Coxe had to say on the subject before the ratification of the Bill of Rights:

> As civil rulers, not having their duty to the people duly before them, may attempt to tyrannize, and as the military forces which must be occasionally raised to defend our country, might pervert their power to the injury of their fellow citizens, the people are confirmed by the next article in their right to keep and bear their *private* arms [emphasis added].

In other words, in spite of what the *Atlanta Constitution*'s cartoonist may think, the Founders did believe that every law-abiding American citizen had a right to own a gun. And the main reason that individual gun ownership was considered to be important was to keep in line the armed agents of the state that Robert Altman and the Pollyannas at *Parade* trust so much. And for the information of Tom Brokaw, Hodding Carter, and the others who believe that the Second Amendment is anachronistic and defended only by right-wing nuts in the 20th century, consider the following comment: "The right of citizens to bear arms is just one more guarantee against arbitrary government, one more safeguard against a tyranny which now appears remote in America, but which historically has proved to be always possible." The words are those of Mr. Liberal himself, the late Hubert H. Humphrey, and were circulated in a 1959 written statement on the Second Amendment, but they express sentiments that went unquestioned until the middle of this century. For the further information of people like George

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Will, who should know better, and Michael Gartner, who call for the repeal of the Second Amendment, the Bill of Rights guarantees rights that the Founders assumed to be natural; consequently, a government that didn't grant them can't repeal them.

Incidentally, a government that monopolizes weaponry can, among many other things, tell pundits to take their precious First Amendment and the rights it guarantees and stuff them where the sun doesn't shine. But I never cease to be amazed that so many people who believe in the power of words can, when it suits their purposes, turn a blind eye to the consequences of words and the ideas they convey.

I am a strong supporter of all of the Bill of Rights, First Amendment, Second Amendment, and all the rest. But with those rights come responsibilities. Media elitists like Lyle Stuart want to take away the vital right to keep and bear arms (the teeth of the Bill of Rights) not only from those Americans who abuse that right by harming innocents with their guns, but from the vast majority of Americans who don't abuse it. But when it comes to the First Amendment, Stuart and company aren't even willing to acknowledge that the rights to free speech and a free press can be abused, let alone consider what should be done about those who abuse them.

Of course, abuse of the right to arms often produces a body count, while the impact of the abuse of the right to free speech and/or a free press isn't that clear cut. So Stuart can deplore the killing of innocent blacks and Jews by gun or any other means at the same time that he feels free, or even obligated, to publish books that claim that killing blacks and Jews is warranted. Men like him can decry violence as they market gangsta rap celebrating the casual killing of cops, the abuse of women, and antisocial behavior in general. They can rant and rave about the easy availability of guns being responsible for school shootings while focusing national attention on the young monsters who carry out these shootings. And they can even produce violent videogames, such as Postal, that can serve as training programs for these monsters.

I'm not suggesting government censorship. I am suggesting that Stuart and the TV executive who responded to Ed Koch should take a good long look in the mirror and assume some of the responsibility for the amoral mess that they have helped to create, instead of blaming it on inanimate objects that they in many ways have encouraged some people to misuse. And I am suggesting that far more social damage can occur through widespread media abuse of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment than through individual abuse of the rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment. For the widespread media abuse of First Amendment rights does much to promote the normlessness and alienation responsible for, among many other unpleasant things, murders committed with guns. Less testing of the limits of the First Amendment might do more to bring about a safer society than would a repeal of the Second Amendment.

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SOCIETY

A Christmas Parable

by Marshall Fishwick

It was beginning to feel a lot like Christmas. The stores were staying open until midnight, and the crowded malls were noisy. But all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. We had just settled down for a long winter's nap, when there was a clatter on the roof and a stirring in the living room.

"Call 911," my wife murmured.

"It's probably just a fallen branch and the dog in the living room—did you forget to walk him?"

"I walked him. You'd better take a look."

I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. To my surprise, the living room light was on, and an old fellow with a white beard was sitting in my easy chair. A bundle of toys was flung on his back, and he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said. "But they tell me you teach a course about our new media and technology. I need some advice."

My guest was so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick.

"What's the trouble?" I said.

"The trouble began with the slowdown of children's letters back at the North Pole," he confided. "I put my elves on the problem, and they found the answer. Children don't write letters any more. Most of them are using the Internet—and ordering from websites and catalogs."

"We're facing a new millennium," I said. "To quote my students—'Get a New Life.'"

"I heard that kind of talk way back at the beginning of this century. They called it the Progressive Era. 'Day by day, in every way, we're getting better and better.' Then we stumbled into the Great Depression, a couple of world wars, and a holocaust. But at least we kept the old mythology alive. Bing Crosby dreamed of a white Christmas, kids whispered their wish lists in my ear, everybody watched Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and my reindeer made their appointed rounds without a mishap. Last year, Prancer got hit by junk from a satellite and had to be hospitalized. The FAA made Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer turn off his red light, since it confused low-flying pilots. How do you think he felt?"

"Sorry about that—but we have to adapt or perish. In the new Global Village, there's not much room for reindeer. Everything's in Now Time. We live on silicon chips and potato chips, send John Glenn back into space, and give up natural reality for virtual reality. Don't you have cable TV and WWW at the North Pole?"

"Oh yes. Now the elves' work output has dropped 40 percent. They've become couch potatoes, watching the same reruns and silly commercials over and over again. They're beginning to sound like Andy Warhol—they like being bored."

"Junk television, like much other useless stuff, will fade like a fallen star. Here today, gone tomorrow. Take a look in our attic—full of things like old plastic records, outmoded sound systems, 8mm movie projectors, reel-to-reel tapes recorders, box cameras. Your elves will improve."

"I used to be respected, even loved. Now when kids sit on my lap, they try to pull my beard off. When I suggest a ten-dollar toy, they want a 50-dollar model, with remote control. A baby doll that doesn't talk and wet its diapers? Forget it!"

"That's a different problem—affluenza."

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"You mean influenza, don't you?"

"No, affluenza, the disease of affluent America. Always more. Glut. The short-sighted view that things will get better and better, bigger and bigger. Buy now, pay later. Forget what we've always known: Things that go up always come down. Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it, with all the bumps and bruises."

"Do I have to wait for another war or depression to regain my status and self-respect?" Santa asked.

"Not if we can insist that we're master of our technology—not *vice versa*. It's the difference between technology and technopoly."

"What's technopoly?"

"A word which tries to restore Socrates' wisdom to today's world. He knew the unexamined life is not worth living. Technopoly warns us that unexamined technology is not worth having. Emerson put it differently. He wrote that 'Things are in the saddle and ride mankind.' The same thought comes down to our day through thinkers like Lewis Mumford, George Orwell, and Neil Postman. We've got to get back in the saddle, bridle the horse, and decide where we want to go."

"Emerson's out of date," Santa said. "My brighter elves read books by John Pfeiffer and John Kemeny, who forecast a 'symbiotic evolution' of the human and computer species. Humans are out, computers are in. We've been turned from names into numbers. Computers are not only smarter but more durable than us. Sooner or later, Kemeny says, they will dominate 'life' on Earth."

"Trendy nonsense. Homo sapiens hasn't evolved over two million years, producing a Homer, Jesus, Shakespeare, Mozart, Jefferson, and Mother Teresa to be sent into oblivion by IBM, Intel, or squawk-talk. Our patriots didn't die to set Bill Gates free. Prancer will be prancing and Dancer will be dancing when the toys of the 1990's have gone into my attic or to the local Goodwill Shop. You can count on it, Santa."

The old man was laughing now. He had a broad face and a little round belly that shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly. Apparently, I had helped to put his worst fears to rest. A wink of his eye and a twist of his head assured me at once I had nothing to dread.

"I can't wait to explain all this to my elves," he beamed. "How many reruns of *I Love Lucy* and *Gunsmoke* do you have to see before you're ready to move on? Speaking of moving on, that's just what I've got to do. I've still got lots of real surprises in my bag—ones that don't talk, squeak, or comment on Clinton's impeachment." We both laughed now. He got up from the chair.

"I'm going back to tell my wife everything's O.K." I said. "Like lots of people, she's forgotten what the clatter of reindeer hooves means on Christmas Eve."

"You do that," Santa said, "while I find an extra stocking and leave her a good old-fashioned sugar plum."

Back I went, with more Christmas spirit than I'd had since hearing Bob Hope talk to the troops during World War II. Santa laid his finger aside of his nose, and giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

I knew what was happening. He was back on his sleigh, giving his team a whistle. I even heard Santa talking to his reindeer:

Now Dasher! Now Dancer
Now Prancer and Vixen!
Who says we all died
In the Age of Dick Nixon?

"Is everything all right?" my anxious wife asked.

"Fine," I said. "I've just had a good conversation with Santa."

She stared at me in disbelief—until we both heard him exclaim ere he drive out of sight:

Happy Christmas to all
And to all a good night!

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EDUCATION

Schools Under Siege

by Donald Gruber

American public education is under siege, but not by kids with guns, as the somber reporters of the six o'clock news would have us believe. Schools are being held hostage by government regulations, antagonistic parents, a biased, mendacious press, and special interest groups who view public education as an opportunity to promote their causes. Many American schools can be compared to combat zones. Classrooms have become arenas where disruptive students ceaselessly challenge the flaccid authority of today's teachers while cooperative, self-disciplined students are sacrificed to liberal ideals.

The decline of American academic excellence can be traced to the beginnings of the left's social experimentation within the schools during the 1950's. Educational "reforms" seemed to make good sense to a public that had become accustomed to science, technology, and psychology. Since then, academics have been gradually replaced by New Age doctrines that have forced teaching and learning to take a backseat to policies of containment and babysitting.

The educational system envisioned by our forefathers to train children to enter society as productive, contributing members has become a laboratory in which to test the left's secular theories. Traditional subject matter has been replaced by child-centered, self-expressive curricula referred to as "self-esteem." As long as the individual feels good about himself, it does not matter how that satisfaction is achieved. To the advocates of this misleading philosophy, any act is appropriate as long as it adds to one's self-esteem. Any behavior is considered a true and legitimate statement of a child's personal expression and is not subject to criticism.

Schools have seen the obligation to discipline insidiously and systematically deleted from the traditional inventory of educational responsibilities. No longer allowed to punish wayward, capricious students for unacceptable conduct, schools now condone bad behavior so as not to offend the offenders. Students cannot learn in the environment of permissive discipline that permeates public schools. If they have no reason to conduct themselves appropriately, children will not do so. The growing numbers of disruptive students increasingly dominate available class time, preventing teachers from teaching and their less capricious classmates from learning. Schools still have rules, but they go largely unenforced. Rules without consequences lead to permissive discipline. Permissive discipline breeds chaos.

In the elementary grades, simple discipline has been superseded by "conflict resolution," "anger management," "sensitivity training," "crisis intervention," and "peer mediation." The transference

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of personal responsibility for unacceptable acts is encouraged, while guilt, shame, or embarrassment are considered detrimental to a child's psychological and social development. Additionally, teachers are discouraged from ever saying "no" or using any negative comments when communicating with children. During class discussions, any answer is correct.

Children, especially adolescents, are eager to learn. It is their natural tendency. Children need and, indeed, crave structure and rules. Proof of this can be found in the severe codes of conduct imposed upon members of juvenile gangs, for which there appears to be no shortage of recruits. Children instinctively seek allowable limits. The often irritating, sometimes shocking behavior of adolescents is due simply to their natural inclination to discover the borders of acceptability. Yet within our culture, establishing behavioral limits is now considered tantamount to child abuse because it supposedly stifles self-expression and damages self-esteem. In the absence of behavioral limits, children will seek any guidance to which they have access. If their sources are corrupt, their behavior will be corrupt. In schools, this translates into disruptive, out-of-control students who have never experienced the consequences of their errant, aberrant ways.

The lines separating the acceptable from the unacceptable have been redrawn. We are witnessing a vast cultural paradigm shift away from decency, honesty, and honor, to an acceptance of degenerating social values, morals, and ethics at all levels of society.

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the appeal of the hedonistic messages promulgated by mass media. "Attitude" has become a popular catchword in sales promotions aimed at a growing population that believes that contempt for traditional values is socially acceptable. This, coupled with the glamorization of the "gangster" mentality and fashion, has helped to create a generation of misfits who are hostile to education.

Once, parents and teachers worked together to regulate, motivate, and educate children; now, the two groups are divided into opposing factions. Teachers' hands are tied by government edicts, while parents, encouraged by 40-plus years of progressive theories and propaganda, remonstrate about a system that seems insensitive and unable to educate their children.

Parents, originally advocates and allies of teachers, have become surrogate enablers of capricious students and adversaries of public education. Liberals (with the help of the press) have brainwashed parents into believing that public education is the source of all the evil in the world. With right-sounding, seemingly well-intentioned arguments, New Age child-rearing experts have played directly to the prejudices and fears of well-meaning but unenlightened parents. Contemporary parents have been force-fed liberal philosophies for so long that they now mindlessly latch onto every child-centered concept propounded by "experts." These so-called authorities operate from purely theoretical positions using flawed or biased research that supports their personal goals or prejudices.

Parents, reassured that they are doing the right thing by adhering to psychobabble rationales about child-rearing, become incredulous and indignant when they receive reports from school that their perfect progeny are not performing up to expectations. Liberalism provides these parents with a scapegoat in the form of public education. If parents have indulged their children and allowed unhindered self-expression, then any problems that have developed are the result of the failure of public education. The liberal utopia relieves parents of guilt by permitting them to transfer blame for their failures to schools and teachers.

Schools tend to take the full force of liberal enmity because they have traditionally been responsible for the literacy and socialization of the nation's children. As liberal social experimentation has engulfed more and more of education, test scores have declined, graduation rates and literacy have plummeted, and dropout rates, failures, and school violence have increased.

The press, bolstered by a liberal bias against public education, leaves no stone unturned in its effort to undermine schools while promoting the liberal agenda. The failure of liberals to produce the perfect educational utopia is lost on the media. The press spews electronic and printed vitriol upon an educational system that is the most visible example of the failure of liberalism to deliver as promised.

Eager to prove that American public education is failing, the press energetically goes after anything negative that is related to schools. The unthinkable violence of school shootings has a particularly seductive appeal. School shootings produce a feeding frenzy among the liberal members of the press because the violence plays to their entrenched anti-public education bias. Like piranha, these ghouls pounce on any morsel of carnage and human suffering. Instead of reporting objectively, they spin the facts to fit their narrow view of reality. They make martyrs of the perpetrators, who are declared the victims of a litany of injustices that can only be overcome by official intervention and regulation enforced by the government.

The characteristic liberal reaction to the threat of any offensive event ever being repeated, regardless of its rarity, is that new laws be quickly passed. Congress irresponsibly yet solemnly reacts to the opinion of the "people" with knee-jerk legislation that adds yet more layers to the already sedimentary accumulation of gun-control laws (at least 18 state and federal gun laws were violated at Littleton). But school shooters are *not* martyrs. Nor are they the *victims* of a failed educational system. School shooters are the demented products of the failed liberal utopia. These tragedies happen when children are indulged and allowed to express themselves in ever more outrageous ways without criticism. Their self-esteem is high, but their judgment, self-control, responsibility, and empathy for others are nonexistent.

"At-risk" students in many schools now outnumber those who are not hostile to education. School administrators, threatened by antagonistic parents who are a phone call away from a lawyer, routinely fail to support faculty members in matters of discipline. Teachers, often held accountable for the capricious behavior of their students, are increasingly frustrated over loss of authority and mounting levels of chaos within classrooms. A liberal press foments hysteria among the people, adding fuel to the fire. No, more gun-control laws won't fix the schools. What is needed is another cultural paradigm shift—this time back to decency, honesty, honor, and discipline.

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FILM

Intimations of Mortality

by George McCartney

Stir of Echoes

Produced by Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund, and Michelle Weisler
Directed by David Koepp
Screenplay by David Koepp, based on the novel by Richard Matheson
Released by An Artisan Entertainment

The Sixth Sense

Produced by Spyglass Entertainment and Hollywood Pictures
Directed by M. Night Shyamalan
Screenplay by M. Night Shyamalan
Released by Buena Vista Pictures

The ghost story has an honorable tradition. Writers as diverse as Shakespeare, Poe, Hawthorne, and Henry James have rung changes on its conventions. It's easy to see why. Audiences love a good haunting. Some are so avid for ghostly visitations that they are ready to be scared silly by those that don't even bother to show up—witness *The Blair Witch Project*.

At its best, the genre cuts to the mortal chase and confronts us with life's ultimate issues, tamed for the moment within the precincts of fiction. Afterward, flushed with terror and pity, we get to have a comforting snack and a good night's sleep: not a bad deal to accept as we make our fateful course through this world. And if the writer has done his or her work, we may even find ourselves facing the next day with greater wisdom and strengthened moral courage.

Stir of Echoes and *The Sixth Sense* both have this tradition in mind. No, neither rises to the level of *Macbeth* or *Turn of the Screw*. (What does in our time?) They are, nevertheless, unusually ambitious, thoughtful films well worth seeing.

Until its formulaic thriller ending, director David Koepp's *Stir of Echoes* is an unsettling, provocative ghost story adapted from Richard Matheson's 1958 novel. It's packed with surprises that go well beyond the usual ectoplasmic eruptions.

The narrative centers on Tom Witzky, played incisively by Kevin Bacon. He's a telephone lineman who finds himself disconnected from his jovial Polish-Irish working class community. At a neighborhood beer party, he's a moping Hamlet, emotionally self-exiled from his friends' drunken merriment. Life seems stale, flat, and unprofitable. Why? "I just didn't expect to be so ordinary," he explains. Not surprisingly, he's about to receive some ghostly exhortations to uncover an extraordinary secret his ordinary world has been hiding.

His college-educated sister-in-law (played with goofy earnestness by Illeana Douglas) diagnoses his malaise as a side effect of his closemindedness. She ridicules him and his friends for never looking beyond the six-block radius of their fortress community. Tom rejects her analysis and on a dare allows her to hypnotize him in an effort to open his mind. During his trance, he receives visionary flashes so brief as to be nearly subliminal. But there is no mistaking their aura of menace. More troubling, they don't go away after he is restored to consciousness. They reappear insistently, disrupting his daily life as they grow in length and detail. In one vision, a single bloody tooth filmed in monstrous close-up rattles across a wooden floor. In another, a huge nail tears from a finger. More visions follow. A ghost of a missing girl, visible only to him and his five-year-old son, Jake (played with charming naturalness by Zachary David Cope), shows up in his house. "Don't be afraid of it, Daddy," Jake innocently implores, trying to allay Tom's growing distress. Apparently, the boy's mind is naturally open to these communications from the spirit world because, unlike his father's, it has not been closed by social conditioning. But I'm guessing. The script is unclear on this point.

After failing to rid himself of his haunting, Tom decides to get to the bottom of it, literally. At the ghost's request, he begins digging up his yard, tearing up his floors, and terrifying his wife, Maggie (Kathryn Erbe in a nicely understated performance). Although Tom, in his frenzied bewilderment, doesn't seem to have any idea what his excavations will uncover, the audience can guess easily enough. I will leave you the pleasure of outguessing Tom. I do, however, want to consider what I take to be the narrative's allegory, cleverly introduced by the hypnotism scenes.

Under his hypnotic spell, Tom finds himself in a vast, old-time movie palace, gazing at a huge 1940's-style screen on which his troubling visions appear with luminous intensity. This screen-within-the-screen passage returns at the middle of the film and implicitly serves to remind us that we have come to the theater to be put under a spell ourselves. While under that spell, we, like Tom, may discover more than we anticipated. Our discoveries, however, are not to be found at the center of the film but at its edges. There, we glimpse what seem at first merely incidental details: a cordoned block party bursting with beer-fueled *bonhomie*; hundreds of neighbors marching in near-tribal frenzy to a high school football match; Tom and Maggie sporting tattoos on their arms and torsos; wives sneering at their husbands for being in a priapic state nearly three hours a day and not all that particular where they plug in; Maggie calling from her grandmother's funeral to report that her family members are "all fine, drunk and fighting with one another"; a child left unmonitored in front of a television, horrified by *The Night of the Living Dead* as adult zombies cannibalize the young.

In these glancing asides, Koepp sketches the state of contemporary mass society, besotted by a popular culture that encourages indulgence in the quick thrills of booze, industrialized sports, ubiquitous pornography, impersonal sex, and violent entertainment. The many who settle for this parody of the good life, as Tom does before his mind is opened, assume it is the "ordinary" state of affairs. They are the hapless moral imbeciles we meet daily, so drugged by a soulless materialism that they are content to sit by as a weird alliance of commercial interest and political expediency devours their children with easy corruptions, leaving them destitute of natural idealism and moral insight. It's no wonder that, when Maggie implores Tom to stop his obsessive digging, he refuses. "This is the most important thing that's ever happened to me in my dumb life," he shouts. Indeed, it is. What he finds will answer the narra-

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tive's literal mystery while resonating powerfully with the film's larger, if somewhat undernourished, ambitions.

Directed and written by M. Night Shyamalan, *The Sixth Sense* has been marketed as a horror story. But like *Echoes*, it uses its hocus-pocus to mesmerize us in order to suggest more than we would expect from a thriller. Once under its spell, we discover a story as old as the *Odyssey*: a boy in search of a father, and a man trying to be that father, both struggling to come to terms with the losses natural to the mortal condition.

The protagonist is Malcolm Crowe, an award-winning child psychologist, played by Bruce Willis. (There are several surprises in this film, not the least the subtle, intelligent performance Shyamalan has drawn from the usually insufferable Willis.) Crowe is recovering from the trauma of helplessly watching one of his former patients commit suicide. His confidence shaken by this experience, he takes on another patient whose difficulties resemble those of the suicide. This is nine-year-old Cole Sear, played by Haley Joel Osment, who is either astonishingly accomplished or a natural (probably a bit of both). Crowe intends to redeem himself by restoring the boy's mental balance. He diagnoses Cole as depressed and perhaps borderline schizophrenic. Cole's problems have left him the helpless butt of his classmates' pranks and the focus of his school's uncomprehending guidance counselors. For relief, he has retreated into a fantasy world populated with an unusual assembly of religious statuettes and action figures. They are his companions both in church and in a homemade tent he has erected in his room. But the source of his troubles lies much deeper. Ghosts haunt him. They bear the wounds of what killed them: A woman displays her slashed wrists, a boy turns to reveal the gash in his skull, three 18th-century Philadelphians appear hanging from a rafter in his school. They seek help from Cole to settle their earthly affairs before they depart altogether. Not knowing what he can possibly do for them, the boy would prefer they just vanish immediately. But, as he finally confides to Crowe, they don't know they are dead, so they go on haunting him relentlessly. "I see them all the time," he whispers plaintively.

Crowe sets out to relieve Cole of his torment by winning his trust, in scenes which masterfully convey the boy's isolation and sadness. These segments are slow, hushed, and so dark as to appear nearly monochromatic. When Cole and Crowe go outdoors, they are always cloaked in shadow. In one shot, they walk down a tree-shaded street, both wearing subdued colors, while in the foreground a troop of Little Leaguers crosses at an intersection, their red, white, and blue uniforms ablaze in the broad daylight. Their sunny American normality serves to intensify Cole's somber condition.

The boy's ability to see the dead is never explained. This is as it should be; the story's ghosts are allegorical. What is really haunting Cole is his father's decision to abandon him and his mother. When we first meet Cole, he is wearing lensless glasses and a stopped watch: Both articles had been his father's. Now they are his talismans, but they prove powerless to make his family life whole once more. Instead, they signal the confusion and obsession that have descended on the boy in his father's absence. And he wears something even more telling: the haunted expression one sees all too often on children today. It's the look of those who have been left on their own well before they are ready to meet life's challenges. Cole is a boy alerted too early to the inevitable losses mortality inflicts on us all.

Once Crowe realizes that the boy's visions are more than psychotic fantasies, he attempts a therapeutic exorcism designed not to banish the ghosts but to accommodate them. It's an unorthodox approach, and the question of its success or failure brings the narrative to its surprise ending. If you haven't seen the film yet, don't let others tell you what this is, as someone told me. While the attentive viewer probably will have intimations of the conclusion, complete foreknowledge will undermine its impact. And this would be a shame, for it's much more than a plot gimmick. The ending genuinely amplifies the film's themes.

The Sixth Sense is more satisfying than *Stir of Echoes*. It's more internally coherent, and the rhythm of its ghost story and its allegorical intentions are more synchronized, but never forced. Shyamalan stumbles occasionally, especially when he reaches for moments of optimism, but these passages detract only slightly from the film's otherwise unfaltering gaze on mortality. Its popular success confirms his accomplishment. He's managed to get the mass audience to sit still and share his meditation on the only morally worthy response to the inevitabilities of our state. That's no mean achievement in the age of *The Phantom Menace* and *American Pie*.

Do these films signal a change for the better? Stay tuned.

George McCartney teaches English at St. John's University.

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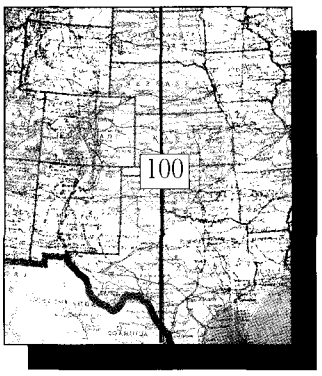
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Bliss Meadows

Most of the 50 states having been designed as political units rather than the geographical ones John Wesley Powell vainly urged Congress to consider in the case of the Western territories, there's no particular reason why southeastern Wyoming should be much more than the place where Nebraska, Colorado, and the Cowboy State fit together. And in fact, it isn't. The difference between this corner of Wyoming and the rest of the state is climatic, topographical, geological, and . . . other. "You know," a young man dressed in the regulation university student uniform (T-shirt and shorts, sandals, backpack, and ballcap) was telling the owner of The Grand Newsstand in Laramie, "Wyoming could be the best place in America if it just had more Hispanics, more blacks and Asians. This state has grave social problems, in my opinion—all these violent rednecks, carrying guns. I read an article in the *Economist* recently and man, the guy that wrote it really ripped this state apart." A San Francisco kid, I guessed, with a C+ average who got turned down at Berkeley. In the coffee shops, restaurants, and politer bars around town a frequent topic of conversation is "the locals," "the rednecks." "I'm scared of them," a female transplant from Manhattan's Upper East Side confided to me after venturing as far into the wilds as Woods Landing, 26 perilous miles southwest of the University of Wyoming campus. God—is this what I have to listen to for the next eight months? It's a sickness, a disease epidemic throughout modern-day America where mass euphoria uncomfortably overlies mass hysteria, like an unstable crust above a seething lava mass. Fortunately, there's still the *real* Wyoming to escape to, only a few hours' drive beyond the beckoning western horizon.

The bear population—black, brown, and grizzly—in the northwestern corner of the state is expanding and restless these days, like the human one. Confrontations between the two grow more common every summer. Besides the .41 Magnum Ruger Blackhawk six-shooter I always carry on my hip in the backcountry, I brought along the .338 Winchester Magnum rifle I use for elk hunting, equipped with open sights for shooting at close-range in an emergency. The heavy gun in its leather scabbard is bulky under the off saddleskirt and pulls the rigging sideways without a careful counterbalance on the near side, but better safe than sorry (even if that means 20 years in prison and a hundred-thousand-dollar fine for killing an animal the federal government considers more valuable than you are). I threw the horsepacks in the bed of the pickup and drove across town and the Union Pacific tracks to West Laramie, where I backed up to the trailer and loaded the horses. Then we hit the road at 65 miles an hour for Dubois, 295 miles away.



Arlington, Elk Mountain, Rawlins, Lamont, Muddy Gap, Jeffrey City, Lander. The country got higher and drier, more rugged and eroded, one deformed geological structure piled on another, a sweeping immensity of shadow, shape, texture, and color—the way I remembered it, the way I like it. Rednecks too, hurtling toward me in pickup trucks and flatbeds at a combined speed of 145 miles an hour, the spare tire bolted to a stud mounted in front of the grille between the headlights, a couple of rifles in the gunrack, plastic water barrels tied off behind the cab, a stubby broom stuck in the posthole ahead of the tailgate: God bless them everyone! Fort Washakie, Crowheart, Burris: The Wind River Indian Reservation, home to the Arapahoe and Shoshone tribes whom the government threw together in a forced relationship many years ago, ignoring—if it ever knew—that the two had despised each other for untold generations before that. And finally Dubois, squeezed between the Wind River and Absaroka Ranges in the valley of the upper Wind River, where Norma awaited me in a 300-square foot house with a ten-gallon gin-and-tonic in her hand.

Over supper at what used to be the Yellowstone Garage restaurant before it moved to Jackson in search of Harrison Ford, James Wolfensohn (president of the World Bank), and the Rockefellers, we debated entering the Absarokas by the Dunoir Valley, Turpin Meadows, or Bonneville Pass. Bonneville won out, partly for the reason that the option coincided with the arrival of a bottle of Pinot Grigio to go with the mixed green salad and pesto linguine. (In the summer season, anyway, Dubois is now a New West town, and we'd be eating Dinty Moore beef stew, Nalley's chili, and tuna fish for the next four days.) The trail, after descending the east side of the pass to Dundee Meadows, follows the West Fork of the Dunoir downstream as far almost as the forest boundary before crossing over to the East Fork, from there upriver to Shoshone Pass and across it, then drops off into a narrow valley at the headwaters of the South Fork of the Shoshone River, identified on the seven-and-a-half-minute topographic map as Bliss Meadows.

"Let's go there," I said. "Bliss Meadows sounds auspicious for my return to the mountains after two years."

"Probably it's just a meadow like all the rest," Norma said. "Every one of them is beautiful, though."

"Don't forget to take your bear spray with you," the waitress advised as she refilled our glasses.

"Not a chance," I promised her. "We follow Fish & Wildlife Service procedure exactly. In case of an attack, Norma sprays the bear, reducing it to a quivering ball of furry Jell-O. Then I fill it full of lead from my trusty .41 Mag., dig a big hole, and bury the damn thing."

As with most cavalry operations, this one got off to a late start owing to logistical problems. It was 4:30 when we rode out from the trailhead and past five when we arrived at Bonneville Pass, three miles away and 2,000 feet higher, and made camp in a grove of Douglas fir where the trail, after climbing through a long, gen-

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tly ascending meadow, plunges steeply downhill by switchbacks through thick forests cut by deep ravines. Pulling the packs from the gelding I noticed him staring across the park to the treeline, where an elegant bowed form, something like a Homeric harp in appearance, appeared to rest in the grass beside a young tree. The form turned itself slowly, becoming a massive set of paddles: I caught them in the rifle scope and recognized a trophy bull moose bedded in the lush summer grass, placidly ruminating as he watched us pitch camp and his cow, emerging from the woods behind him, grazed among outcroppings of alpine rock.

This was bear country already. When, a little before dusk, the mare lifted her nose from the grass and stood with her ears forward, rigid and trembling on the picketline, I checked the rifle and rested it against a tree within reach of where we sat drinking red wine by the fire. While Norma incinerated the remains of our supper and, using hot water and soap, carefully removed every trace of food from the cookpots and pans, I brought the horses and tied them apart at opposite ends of the grove. Horses are always happy to let you know when a bear approaches camp. We sat up late to enjoy the full moon blanching the high peaks and illuminating the surrounding park and turned in finally with the loaded rifle between us and the unholstered revolver by my head.

On the switchbacks next morning the mare's load shifted, the saddle turned with Norma still in it, and a minor wreck was forestalled only by the presence of mind of the horse, who stood patiently with her head lowered while we loosened the billet strap and heaved the saddle with the heavy pack attached to it into place again. Riding on we heard elk crashing off in the timber and found fresh bear scat in the trail. I am less nervous about a bear encounter as such than of Saab Star under me should we meet one on the trail: In fact, I think I'd rather be riding the bear.

At the foot of the pass we picked up the West Fork of the Dunoir and followed it south through a series of descending meadows linked by patches of forest in a long valley overlooked by the Pinnacles to the west and Coffin Butte on the eastern side. The horses barreled ahead like a Western freight, bringing us after only an hour's ride to the trail fork where we turned east along Falls Trail to the Dunoir's East Fork. Though fat and soft still from two years in New Mexico, the horses humped their way up the steeps as steadily as if they were made of iron rather than just flesh and blood, then took their wind back on the long level section of trail crossing beneath the reddish-gray breccia head of Coffin Butte towering above the forested bench. We had just passed the secondary trail up to Watkins Lake when the gelding started between my knees, halted abruptly, and put his ears forward. Expecting the worst, I turned him quickly in the trail to face the mare, dismounted, and handed the reins to Norma.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"He saw something, or winded it. I'm going ahead to find out what."

The rifle slipped easily from the sweat-softened scabbard. I chambered a round and started forward, holding the gun at my hip and moving slowly, looking from side to side up the trail. The horse had too much familiarity with elk to be spooked by one. Something brown showed behind a log 30 yards ahead. I brought the rifle up to scope it and heard a mewing cry from the woods beyond. It was answered by another, and suddenly the forest was filled with fleeing bodies showing reddish tan in the sunlight falling between the deep green trees. I counted eight cows and three calves, including the one that jumped from back of the log, before the rattling knock of hooves striking against down timber died away in the forest and the wilderness was silent again in the hot piney stillness of afternoon.

We made camp in a meadow beside a feeder creek, at a distance of a couple of hundred yards from East Fork. The ground was partly marshy, with rich graze for the horses, and there were signs of a seasonal elk camp, among them a spiked crosspole inside the treeline set high enough to hang a big bull out of reach of marauding grizzlies. I tied a rock to one end of a length of nylon cord and the bear bag, containing the supplies we wouldn't need for supper, at the other. It took several tries to pitch the rock over the crosspole, but the fourth or fifth made it. I heaved the bag high, tied the rope off to a young fir tree, and returned to camp for the cocktail hour. Seated on a log beside the fire, we drank Jim Beam and water and ate smoked oysters from a tin while the horses grazed hungrily, lifting their feet with a sucking sound from the marsh, and the rocky parapets around burned red with the evening sun.

"That's Shoshone Pass up there," I told Norma. "It doesn't look all that interesting, does it?"

"Mostly it's just forest. Bliss Meadows still sounds intriguing, though."

Old Griz would walk ten miles for an oily, stinking can smelling of smoked oysters—and has. I threw the thing on the fire to burn out while Norma spooned chili into a pot and placed the first tortilla in the frypan to brown. When supper was ready I poured more Beam, and we ate seated on the ground with our backs against the log to watch the moonrise. We had finished washing up from supper and settled ourselves for a last toddy as, from the direction of Shoshone Pass, a howl arose, deep and bodied and powerful, entirely unlike the coyote's cracked falsetto. I looked at Norma.

"It's a wolf," I said. I'd never heard one out-of-doors before, but the sound was unmistakable.

"That could be. This is an experimental release area in here."

There's a reason why wolves were exterminated from this country by the 1920's or 30's, and I believe that ranchers are justified in wanting to shoot them. Even so, hearing one in the wild was an awesome thing, compared with which the coyote howl is as unimpressive as a toy poodle puppy yapping in a Madison Avenue pet shop.

Through binoculars, I had a closer look at Shoshone Pass in the morning and concluded there was nothing much to be seen up there. Also, something warned me not to push my luck on this return trip to the Wyoming wilderness. I'd had moose and elk and coyote and wolves, which was happiness enough: Bliss, if it existed at all, would be overkill. We made a day ride into the canyons opening to the meadow, and next day struck camp and packed out. In Dubois we went for supper at Cavallo Creek again where we ate Black Forest mushrooms over pasta and drank another bottle of Pinot Grigio, served by the same waitress who had seen us off four days before on our trip. She asked if we'd had a bear encounter, and if we had made it over Shoshone Pass. I told her no; maybe next year. The girl made a face at me, prettily.

"You know," she said, "I didn't want to say anything, but me and my ex-fiancé hiked in to Bliss Meadows last summer. It was, like, a disappointment. There's really nothing much up there to see."

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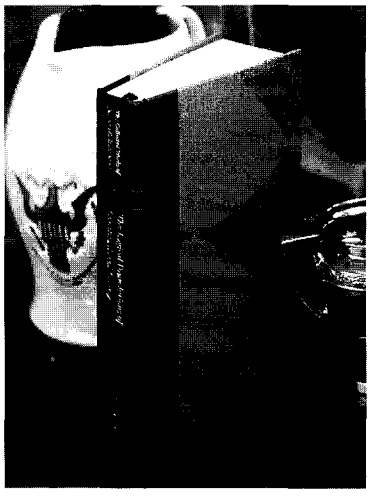

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